महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK I

THE COMPLETE ĀDI PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Ādi Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Writers Workshop

Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK ONE

The Complete Ādi Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lal (1929-2010) was Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. Married Shyamasree Devi 1955; son Ananda, and daughter Srimati. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in 1966, and Visiting Professor at the University of Illinois in 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, 1973-1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Delegate to Adelaide Festival of Arts, Australia, 1980; Asian Poets' Conference, South Korea, 1987; Cambridge Literature Seminar, UK, 1987; World Poets' Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 1988; Indian Writers' Delegation to Sweden, 1988; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, in 2005. D. Litt. (Hon. Causa) of University of Calcutta for his "transcreation of the *Mahabharata*", 2006. Distinguished Professor award for Lifetime Achievement, St Xavier's College, 2007. In October 1999 he began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of his transcreated Mahābhārata to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning at the G. D. Birla Sabhagar Library of Dharma and Culture in Kolkata to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece. These were later telecast by Tara TV. He authored over 100 books, available from WRITERS WORKSHOP.

Preface

A print-culture mini-preface to an oral mahā-epic is in order. Some guidelines for the Vyāsa aficionado:

1] My transcreation is the full "ragbag" version. It is the only complete, strictly śloka-by-śloka rendering, not excepting enjambements, in any language. It includes all the ślokas from the Southern and other recensions which are normally left out in the "authorised" North Indian recension. It also includes all ślokas from the Poona Bhandarkar edition that are left out or censored in the Southern and Northern versions. I believe in the sanctity of an all-inclusive Mahābhārata, and see no reason why such very Indian all-inclusiveness should not be respected by textual scholars who stress strict adherence to lexical principles, and pompously dismiss popular and folk passages and episodes as garrulous "interpolations".

2] I have tried to retain the oral, spoken quality of Vyāsa's epic, by which I mean that if Yudhiṣṭhira were speaking in English, this is the kind of English I think he would be speaking. To miss the sūta quality of the narative recited by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya at the snake-yajña in Naimiṣa forest is to do grave, irreparable injustice to Vyāsa (and to his amanuensis Gaṇeśa). This version is meant to be heard, not read; if read, heard as well.

3] I have tried to parallel the tightness of the Sanskrit śloka by the brevity of my prose renderings, and by an equal tightness of the English verse patterns. Padding, interpretation, and elaboration are avoided. Many Sanskrit words explain themselves (or are very satisfactorily defined in Webster's Third and other dictionaries). These are best left untranslated. My version is for the educated English-knowing Indian; non-Indians can eavesdrop and overhear. The Indian will know his tradition reasonably well; others may have to do some hard homework.

INVOCATION

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयं उदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva narottamaṁ |
Devīm Sarasvatīṁ Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

SECTION ONE

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim *Jaya*!

1 One day when the mahā-ṛṣis of rigid vows who had attended the twelve years' sacrifice of Kulapati Śaunaka were relaxing in the forest of Naimiṣa,

2 The son of ṛṣi Lomaharṣaṇa, Ugrasrava (popularly known as Sauti) came to them. Sauti was deeply learned in the Purāṇas.

3 The practisers of tapasyā received him at their āśrama with pleasure, knowing what a wonderful storyteller he was, and expecting to be entertained.

4 Sauti joined his palms in respectful *añjali* before them, and asked how the tapasyā-penances were progressing.

5 They sat down; and Sauti humbly took the seat indicated to him.

6 After he was comfortably seated and looked rested, one of the sages said:

7 "O lotus-petal-eyed one, from where have you come? Where have you been all this time? Tell me, please, everything, in detail."

8 Fluent Sauti needed only this prompting to place before the august and holy assembly a full and dignified account.

9 "After listening to the splendid, sacred stories of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata*, recited in full by Vaiśampāyana

10 At the great snake-sacrifice ordered by the mahātmā rāja-ṛṣi Janamejaya,

11 The prince of princes, the son of Parīkṣit, in whose own presence I had the honour of standing,

12 I wandered all over the country, visiting many shrines and sacred rivers till I came to Samanta-pañcaka, a place revered by the twice-born.

13 This is the site of the terrible war between the sons of Kuru and Pāṇḍu, when all the rulers of Bhārata took opposite sides.

14 But I was anxious to see you, so I hurried here.
Revered elders and sages,
you, who are to me like Brahmā,
who are noble and learned and most blessed,
who shine in this place of sacrifice
with the glory of the sun;

15. Whom ablutions have purified,
who have sat in silent meditation and fed the sacred fire,
and are lifted beyond the world's cares –
what can I tell you that you do not already know?

16 Should I repeat the legends of the Purāṇas,
full of dharma and artha?
Or should I recount the glorious exploits
of saints and rulers in the history of mankind?"

17 The ṛṣis replied: "The Purāṇa, first composed by ṛṣi Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, appreciated by the gods and Brahmā-ṛṣis, is a sacred work.

18 Its many sections are written in many styles; it is simple yet subtle and complex; it is the greatest story ever told, enriched with Vedic references.

19 Sweet is its diction, wide its range; it sums up the Vedas; other sacred texts are commentaries on it.

20 But from you, Sauti, we would rather hear the *Mahābhārata*, the sacred history that casts out fear, the holy composition of incomparable Vyāsa.

21 And we would like to hear it exactly as it was recited at the snake-sacrifice of rājā Janamejaya by ṛṣi Vaiśampāyana, under the direction of Vyāsa himself."

22 Sauti replied :
I bow to Iśāna, Primal Being,
the One, the unchanging,
eternal, unrealizable Brahman,
who both exists and non-exists;
the focus of all adoration,
to whom all make offerings;

23 I bow to Iśāna, All-Creator,
who both exists and non-exists,
who is both universe and non-universe,
creator of high and low:

24 I bow to Iśāna, Undecaying One,
who is Viṣṇu, giver of good, and Goodness itself,
worthy of worship;
who is Hari, lord of the senses,
guide of the moving and unmoving world.

25 Let me now place before you the thoughts of the incomparable ṛṣi, Vyāsa of splendid deeds, who is respected by all of us here.

26 Some poets have already sung this story; some are reciting it now before others; and others will sing it in times to come.

27 This story is a source of knowledge in the three worlds;
the twice-born know it in outline and detail.

28 It is filled with beautiful speech, human as well as divine,
in varied metres, for which reason the learned delight in
it.

29 At first, there was no light,
no radiance, only darkness;
then was born the Egg of Brahmā,
exhaustless and mighty seed of life.

30 Its name is Mahaddivya, the Mahā-Divine;
it was born at the beginning of the yuga;
in it shone the true light,

31 Eternal, incomparable, inconceivable,
omnipresent, invisible, and subtle,
from which flow being and non-being.

32 From this egg came Pitāmaha Brahmā,
the one and only lord, Prajāpati;
with Suraguru and Sthāṇu;

33 And Manu, Ka, and Parameṣṭhin;
and Praceta and Dakṣa,
and the seven sons of Dakṣa.

34 Then came the twenty-one Prajāpatis,
and the one inconceivable whom the ṛṣis know;
then came the Viśva-devas, Ādityas, Vasus, and
Aśvins;

35 The Yakṣas, the Sādhyas, Piśācas,
Guhyakas and Pitṛs;

36 The wise sages of Brahmā and the royal sages
famed for their noble qualities;
then the waters, the heavens, the earth, sky, air,
and the points of the heavens;

37 The years, seasons, months and fortnights,
and day and night in successive order.

38 At the end of the yuga, when the world ends,
whatever is living, and lifeless,
whatever is visible in the universe,
will revert to chaos;

39 And when a new yuga begins,
all will be reborn,
like the fruits of the earth in their various seasons.

40 This is the wheel of death and birth,
endlessly revolving, birth and death,
without beginning, without end.

41 The number of devas, for example, was thirtythree thousand thirtythree hundred and thirtythree. Here is a brief account.

42 The sons of Div were Bṛhadhānu, Cakṣus, Ātmā, Vibhāvasu, Savita, Ṛcīka, Arka, Bhānu, Āśavāha, and Ravi.

43 Of these Vivasvāns of the past, Mahya was the youngest; Mahya's son was Devavrata.

44 Devavrata had one son, Suvrata; Suvrata had three sons, Daśajyoti, Śatajyoti, and Sahasrajyoti, each of whom had countless children.

45 Famous Daśajyoti had ten thousand, Śatajyoti ten times that;

46 And Sahasrajyoti had ten times the number of Śatajyoti's children.

47 From them come the races of the Kurus, Yadus, and Bharata; the line of Yayāti and Ikṣvāku; and the rāja- ṛṣis. Many other races were then born,

48 Many creatures, and many dwelling-places created. Then were created the triple mysteries, Veda, Yoga, and Vijñā na; Dharma, Artha, and Kāma;

49 And various texts on Dharma, Artha, and Kāma; rules for the conduct of mankind;

50 Histories, commentaries, and the various śrutis – all embodied in the *Mahābhārata*.

51 Ṛṣi Vyāsa studied them all and noted them in his epic in the proper order.

52 Ṛṣi Vyāsa presented this storehouse of knowledge in detailed as well as condensed forms, because the learned of the world are eager to know it at length and in abridgment.

53 Some read the *Mahābhārata* from the first mantra, others begin with the story of Āstika; others begin with Uparicara; and some Brahmins read it all the way through.

54 The learned show how well they know the smṛtis by commenting on the epic. Some are good at explaining, others at remembering.

55 Vyāsa, son of Satyavatī, composed this epic when, after much tapasyā and meditation, he had mastered the eternal Veda.

56 When the learned and strict-vowed ṛṣi Vyāsa, son of Parāśara, finished this greatest of all epics, he faced the problem of how to teach it to his pupils.

57 And Brahmā, the worlds' guru, possessor of the six attributes, saw his dilemma, and visited him in person in order to help him and, through him, mankind.

58 Vyāsa, though surrounded by large numbers of learned men, saw him come, and was surprised. He folded his palms in añjali, bowed, and ordered a seat to be brought.

59 He stood before Hiraṇya-garbha Brahmā the Golden-Wombed One ensconced on his distinguished seat.

60 Ordered by Brahmā Parameṣṭhin, he sat down near the seat, smiling with joy.

61 The glorious Vyāsa said to Brahmā: "I have composed, O Lord Brahmā, a poem worthy of respect.

62 The mystery of the Vedas, and other mysteries,
I have explained:
The rituals of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads,
I have included;

63 I have collected the Purāṇas, and
composed their history,
Listing the three divisions of time,
past, present, and future;

64 Decay and death, fear and disease,
I have included;
Life and non-life, different creeds,
various ways of living;

65 Rules for the four castes, essence of the Purāṇas,
an account of yoga,
Rules for the religious novice, dimensions
of earth, sun, and moon,

66 And of planets, stars, and constellations,
I have supplied;
The four yugas; Ṛk, Sāma, and Yajur Vedas;
the Adhyātmā,

67 Nyāya, the science of human orthoepy, pathology,
charity, Pāśupata,
Birth, divine and human, for different purposes,
are described in my poem;

68 Descriptions of places of pilgrimage,
and holy places,
Rivers, mountains, forests and seas,
are all in my poem;

69 Descriptions of celestial cities, of the kalpas,
the art of war,
Different nations, peoples, languages, customs,
are all in my poem.

70 All that is useful to all can be found in my poem;
but I cannot find a human to take it all down."

71 Brahmā replied: "I respect you highly for your insight into the divine mysteries, and I declare it in front of this assembly of learned *munis*, famed for their holiness.

71 I am aware that you have revealed the Word of Brahmā in the language of truth. You have called your work a poem. It shall be a poem.

73 It shall be a *kāvya* no poet in this world will equal, just as the householders' dharma is not equalled by the three other āśramas.

74 Think of Gaṇeśa; he will write down your poem." Saying this (continued Sauti), Brahmā returned to his abode.

75 So Vyāsa imaginated Gaṇeśa. And hardly had he thought than Gaṇeśa,

76 Remover of obstacies, always ready to grant the wishes of his devotees, appeared at the place where Vyāsa was sitting.

77 Vyāsa welcomed him; he sat down; and Vyāsa said, "Gaṇapati, lord of people, take down this poem called the *Mahābhārata* that is in my mind, as I dictate it. Please be my scribe."

78 "With pleasure," replied Gaṇeśa, "but on one condition: my pen must not be allowed to stop even for a second."

79 "Stop wherever you don't understand," said Vyāsa. Gaṇeśa agreed, intoning "*Auṁ*". Vyāsa began to dictate, and he began to write.

80 Vyāsa, to gain time, dictated some tightly-knotted ślokas. And the dictation proceeded according to agreement.

81 I know about eight thousand and eight hundred ślokas (continued Sauti). So does Śuka and, possibly, Sañjaya.

82 But to this day no one has been able to plumb the subtle meanings in those tightly-knitted ślokas.

83 Even the omniscient Gaṇeśa had to scratch his head over them, while Vyāsa went on with his business of prolific composing.

84 Like a stick of collyrium
The wisdom of this poem opens the eyes
Of a world swathed in darkness.

85 As the sun scatters darkness,
So the *Mahābhārata* dispels ignorance,
By discoursing on Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa.

86 As the full moon opens the waterlily
with soft light,
So this Purāṇa expands the mind of man
with the light of śruti.

87 The womb of nature is a house of darkness.
This darkness is scattered by the lamp of history.

88 This poem is a tree,
Its seeds the list of contents,
Its roots the Pauloma and Āstīka divisions,
Its trunk the section called Sambhava,
Its perches the Sabhā and Āraṇya chapters,
Its organic knot the book of Araṇi;

89 Its pith Virāṭa and Udyoga,
Its main branch the Bhīṣma,
Its leaves the Droṇa,
Karṇa its lovely flowers,

90 Śalya their fragrance,
Strī and Aisika its cool shade,
Śānti its great fruit.

91 Its undying sap the Aśvamedha,
Āsramavāsika the place where it grows,
And Mausala the core of the Vedas.

92 All good Brahmins respect this tree.
It is like the clouds to man, exhaustless.
It is, to illustrious poets, a source of livelihood.

93 I will tell you (Sauti went on) about the eternal fruits and flowers of this tree. They are pure and pleasant to the taste; even the gods relish them.

94 On the advice of his mother and Bhīṣma (the son of Gaṅgā), Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, by the two wives of Vicitravīrya, became the father of three sons, who shone like three flames.

95 Having fathered Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura, Vyāsa returned to his āśrama to practise tapasyā.

96 Until his three sons were dead, Vyāsa did not present his *Mahābhārata* to the world.

97 But when Janamejaya and thousands of Brahmins earnestly requested him, he passed it on to his pupil Vaiśampāyana.

98 And Vaiśampāyāna recited the epic, seated among his co-ascetics, during the intervals of the sacrificial ceremony, repeatedly encouraged to proceed whenever he would pause.

99 Vyāsa has described in full detail the glory of the house of Kuru, the virtue of Gāndhārī, the wisdom of Vidura, and the constancy of Kuntī.

100 The mahā-ṛṣi has described the divinity of Krishna, the nobility of the sons of Pāṇḍu, the misconduct of the sons and followers of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

101 Originally the *Mahābhārata*, without the fringe episodes, consisted of twenty four thousand ślokas: this, to the learned, is the real epic.

102 Later he added a list of contents, summarising the epic in a hundred and fifty ślokas.

103 He taught this summary first to his son Śuka, and then to such of his pupils as possessed the same qualifications.

104 After which, he added another collection of sixty lakh ślokas. Of these thirty lakhs are known in the world of the gods.

105 Fifteen lakhs are known in the world of pitṛs, fourteen lakhs in the world of the gandharvas, and one hundred thousand – one lakh – in the world of men.

106 Nārada recited them to the gods, Asita and Devala to the pitṛs, and Śuka to the gandharvas, yakṣas, and rākṣasas.

107 Vaiśampāyana, a pupil of Vyāsa, a sage of firm principles and deeply learned in the Vedas, recited them to the world of human beings. I might add that I, Sauti, have also recited one hundred thousand ślokas.

108 Duryodhana is a giant tree, born of passion;
Karṇa is its trunk,
Śakuni its branches.
Duḥśāsana its fruits and flowers,
Unwise Dhṛtarāṣṭra its root.

109 Yudhiṣṭhira is a giant tree, born of dharma;
Arjuna is its trunk,
Bhīma its branches,
The two sons of Mādrī its flowers and fruits,
Krishna, Brahmā, and Brahmins its roots.

110 Having conquered many lands with wisdom and valour, Pāṇḍu retired to a forest to spend his last days among ascetics.

111 He brought misfortune upon himself when, while hunting, he struck down a stag coupling with a mate. And this misfortune was a warning to the princes of his line as long as they lived.

112 Following the rules of the śāstras, his two queens, Kuntī and Mādrī, accepted the love of the gods, Dharma, Vāyu, Śakra-Indra, and the twin Aśvins.

113 The children of these gods grew up under the care of their mothers in the company of ascetics and in holy āśramas.

114 These Pāṇḍava children of the gods were taken by holy men to the presence of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons. The children had their hair knotted on their heads, and were dressed as brahmacāris.

115 "These are our pupils," they said. "They are your sons, your brothers, and your friends. They are the Pāṇḍavas." Saying which, they left.

116 When the Kauravas saw them introduced as the sons of Pāṇḍu, the noble group among them shouted joyous approval.

117 But some maintained that they were not the sons of Pāṇḍu; others insisted they were. Some wondered how they could be the sons of Pāṇḍu – for had not Pāṇḍu died long ago?

118 But voices from all sides shouted: "They are welcome! Divine grace has given us the sons of Pāṇḍu! Let them be warmly welcomed everywhere!"

119 When the shouts of welcome stopped, loud voices of praise were heard echoing in the sky.

120 Fragrant flowers rained down; conches were blown, kettledrums sounded. Such wonders accompanied the arrival of the princes.

121 And the joyful chorus of the citizens, expressing their happiness on that occasion, swelled till it seemed to touch the sky.

122 Without the least fear from anyone, and respected by the citizens, the Pāṇḍavas lived there, studying the Vedas and other śāstras.

123 The chief citizens were pleased with the integrity of Yudhiṣṭhira, the prowess of Bhīma, the courage of Arjuna,

124 The gentle service of Kuntī to her superiors, and the humility of Nakula and Sahadeva. Their heroic qualities impressed and delighted everyone.

125 Some years later, Arjuna showed his skill in a difficult archery contest, and obtained Draupadī as his wife at a svayamvara to which a large assembly of kings and princes had come.

126 From then on he was highly respected as an excellent archer. And on the battlefield he shone like the sun, dazzling his enemies.

127 He defeated all the neighbouring rulers and tribes, accomplishing what was necessary for Yudhiṣṭhira to perform the Rājasūya Yajña.

128 With Krishna's advice and the strength of Bhīma and Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira slew the proud Jarāsandha,

129 And earned the right to perform the Rājasūya sacrifice, a ritual requiring enormous provisions and offerings, and bestowing supreme merit.

130 Duryodhana attended this sacrifice. He saw on all sides the great wealth of the Pāṇḍavas –

131 Offerings of gold and jewels, precious stones, horses and elephants, mantles, garments,

132 Shawls and furs, carpets made of the skin of the *raṅkava* deer – and he was filled with envy and anger.

133 And when he saw the splendid assembly hall constructed by Maya in the style of a celestial palace, he could not control himself.

134 When some subtleties of the architecture confused him, Bhīma in the presence of Krishna mocked him as one of low birth.

135 It was brought to the notice of Dhṛtarāṣṭra that his son Duryodhana, in spite of the enjoyments of the palace, was showing signs of leanness, paleness, and listlessness.

136 Because he loved his son, the blind king gave Duryodhana permission to play a game of dice with the Pāṇḍavas. Vāsudeva-Krishna was furious when he heard of this.

137 Krishna was displeased, yet he did nothing to stop the bitterness; he overlooked the game and many terrible unjust events that happened because of it.

138 And, ignoring Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Vidura and Kṛpa (Śāradvat's son), the Kṣatriyas killed each other in the great carnage that followed.

139 When Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard of the Pāṇḍavas' victory, he recalled the views of Duryodhana, Karṇa, and Śakuni;

140 He reflected a while and said to Sañjaya, "Sañjaya, listen to me. Listen to every word I have to say. You will then see that I do not deserve your contempt.

141 You are intelligent, wise, learned in the śāstras. I never wanted war; I never wanted my race destroyed.

142 I made no distinction between my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu.

143 My own sons were impulsive, and disliked me for I was old and blind. I endured it because I loved them, and because my state was miserable. I was a fond old father to a son whose folly grew daily.

144 My own son, a visitor to the great display of wealth by the powerful sons of Pāṇḍu, was mocked because he fumbled when entering the hall.

145 He could not stand the insult, and he knew he could not defeat the Pāṇḍavas in an open fight.

146 Instead of seeking noble success by his own efforts, with the help of Śakuni, the king of Gāndhāra, he planned an unfair game of dice.

147 Listen to me, Sañjaya. I will tell you all that happened and was brought to my knowledge. When you hear me recount the details, you will see that I am indeed a man with prophetic vision.

148 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.
What was there for me to look forward to,
when they brought me news that Arjuna
had bent the bow, pierced and grounded the target,
married Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and carried her away
in the very presence of the chiefs and princes?

149 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when they brought me news that Arjuna
had abducted Subhadrā of the race of Madhu,
married her in the city of Dvārakā –
and Subhadrā's brothers, Krishna and Balarāma,
far from resenting it, entered Indraprastha as friends.

150 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when they brought me news that Arjuna
had gratified Agni by feeding him the Khāṇḍava forest,
and blocked the downpour of Indra, king of the gods,
with celestial arrows.

151 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that the five Pāṇḍavas
had escaped unhurt from the house of lacquer,
that Vidura himself had arranged their escape.

152 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when Arjuna pierced the target and married Draupadī;
and the brave Pāñcālas joined the Pāṇḍavas.

153 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when the shining star of the Kṣatriyas, Jarāsandha,
foremost ruler of the Magadha dynasty,
was killed by Bhīma with his bare hands.

154 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when they brought me news that the sons of Pāṇḍu
had defeated all the rulers and chiefs in war,
and declared their victory by performing the Rājasūya.

155 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that the weeping and unfortunate Draupadī,
wearing a one-piece dress, was dragged in her period,
and shamed in the sabhā with no one to save her.

156 When I heard that the scoundrel Duḥśāsána
was foiled in his efforts to strip Draupadī,
her single garment unrolling into a giant pile of clothes,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

157 When I heard that Yudhiṣṭhira, defeated in the
dice-game,
had lost his kingdom to Subala's son, Śakuni,
but continued to receive the support of his brothers,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

158 And when I heard that the weeping Pāṇḍava brothers
shared their misfortune with their elder brother,
consoling him, and following him faithfully to exile,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

159 When I heard that snātakas and pious Brahmins
followed Yudhiṣṭhira to exile in the forest,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

160 When I heard that Arjuna had pleased three-eyed Śiva,
who appeared before him disguised as a hunter,
and obtained from the god of gods the celestial
weapon Pāśupata,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

161 When I heard that Arjuna had visited the region
of the gods,
and obtained divine weapons from the hands of Indra,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

162 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Arjuna had routed the Kālakeyas
and Paulomas,
so proud of the boon they had received from Śiva,
invincible even when fighting against gods.

163 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Arjuna had journeyed to the
realm of Indra,
killed the anti-gods, and returned in triumph.

164 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Bhīma and the other sons of Kuntī,
accompanied by Vaiśrāvaṇa-Kubera had entered the
country inaccessible to men.

165 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that my sons, advised by Karṇa,
imprisoned by gandharvas
while journeying on Ghoṣayātrā, were rescued by
Arjuna.

166 When I heard that Dharma, disguised as a yakṣa,
set questions to Yudhiṣṭhira,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

167 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I learnt that my sons were unable to trace
the disguised Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī in the kingdom
of Virāṭa.

168 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Arjuna, from a single chariot,
had routed my heroes in the kingdom of Virāṭa.

169 When I heard that Virāṭa, the king of Matsya,
had offered to Arjuna his daughter Uttarā,
and Arjuna had accepted her for his son Abhimanyu,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

170 When I heard that Yudhiṣṭhira, dice-defeated and
wealth-deprived,
exiled and separated from his relatives and friends,
had gathered an army of seven akṣauhiṇis,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

171 When I heard that Krishna of the race of Madhu,
who once straddled the universe with one foot,
was busy seeking the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

172 When I heard that Nārada thought fit to declare
Krishna and Arjuna as Nārāyaṇa and Nara,
that both had been seen in the realm of Brahmā,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

173 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Krishna, solicitous of the welfare
of the worlds,
had come to the Kauravas on a mission of peace,
and returned disappointed.

174 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that, resolving to imprison Krishna,
Karṇa and Duryodhana had conspired –
and Krishna had revealed the whole cosmos in himself.

175 When I heard that Kuntī, weeping in her sorrow,
was consoled by Krishna as she stood near his chariot,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

176 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Vāsudeva-Krishna and Bhīṣma,
Śāntanu's son,
were the Pāṇḍavas' advisers,
and that they had been blessed by Droṇa, son of
Bharadvāja.

177 When I heard that
Karṇa had said to Bhīṣma,
"When you fight, I will not fight,"
and left,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

178 When I was told that Krishna, Arjuna, and the
powerful Gāṇḍīva bow
had joined forces,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

179 When I heard that Krishna
revealed his Cosmic Universal Form
to Arjuna, despondent near his chariot
on the Kurukṣetra battlefield,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

180 When I heard that Bhīṣma, the great foe-slayer,
killed ten thousand warriors each day, but not
one Pāṇḍava,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

181 When I heard that Bhīṣma, the son of Gaṅgā,
had revealed to his enemies the manner of his dying,
and the Pāṇḍavas had joyously accepted his words,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

182 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.
when I heard that Arjuna, using Śikhaṇḍin as a
shield on his chariot,
had wounded the brave and invincible Bhīṣma.

183 When I heard that the old hero Bhīṣma,
having cut down the Somakas till a handful remained,
himself lay dying on a bed of arrows,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

184 When I heard that,
on request from Bhīṣma,
Arjuna pierced the ground with his arrow,
and slaked Bhīṣma's thirst,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

185 When I heard that Vāyu,
Indra and Surya
were helping the Pāṇḍavas,
and beasts of prey
were frightening our army,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

186 When I heard that Droṇa
displayed varied war-skills,
but could not kill a single
one of the Pāṇḍavas,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

187 When I heard that
the mahā-chariot-heroes
called the Saṁśaptakas,
assigned to kill Arjuna,
had been killed by him,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

188 When I heard that Abhimanyu,
the son of Subhadrā,
had pierced our *cakravyū ha* battle formation,
defended by the strong-armed Droṇa himself,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

189 When I heard that
our mahā-chariot-heroes,
unable to fight Arjuna,
surrounded and slew the young Abhimanyu,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

190 When I heard that the foolish
Kauravas were joyfully
praising the slaughter
of young Abhimanyu,
and Arjuna had taken
his vow to kill Jayadratha,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

191 When I heard that Arjuna
had taken the vow to kill
Saindhava-Jayadratha
and carried out his promise
in the presence of his enemies,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

192 When I heard that Krishna, finding Arjuna's horses tired,
unharnessed them, gave them water to drink, and re-harnessed them,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

193 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Arjuna, while his horses were being watered,
singlehanded on his chariot fought off his assailants.

194 When I heard that Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki of the race of Vṛṣṇi,
after scattering the army of Droṇa (already mangled by an elephant attack),
had joined the camp of Krishna and Arjuna,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

195 When I heard that Karṇa
dragged Bhīma with his bow-end,
had Bhīma in his power,
yet allowed him to escape
with a few token insults,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

196 When I heard that Droṇa,
Kṛtavarman, Aśvatthāman,
Kṛpa, Karṇa and Śalya
in their very presence
let Saindhava-Jayadratha be slain,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

197 When I heard that Krishna,
with consummate cunning,
had the divine weapon Śakti
(which Indra gave Karṇa)
used against the frightful-faced Ghaṭotkaca,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

198 When I heard that in the fight
between Karṇa and Ghaṭotkaca,
Karṇa used the Śakti-missile,
(which was meant to kill Arjuna),
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

199 When I heard that Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
breaking the rules of war,
killed Droṇa as he lay
unconscious in his chariot,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

200 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Nakula, son of Mādrī,
made the chariot of the son of Droṇa run in circles,
and engaged him in equal combat in front of the armies.

201 I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya,
when I heard that Drona's son Aśvatthāman
had misused his weapon, the Nārāyaṇa,
and failed to kill the Pāṇḍavas.

202 When I heard that Bhīma,
with no one to stop him,
had actually drunk the blood
of his cousin-brother Duḥśāsana,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

203 When I heard that brave Karṇa
was killed by Arjuna in battle
in the war between brothers
that baffled even the gods,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

204 When I heard that Yudhiṣṭhira had defeated Duḥśāsana,
fearful Kṛtavarman, and the son of Droṇa,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

205 When I heard Yudhiṣṭhira had killed the king of Madra,
who once dared to challenge Krishna in battle,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

206 When I heard that magic-fingered Saubala-Śakuni,
the root of the dice-game and the feud,
had been killed by Sahadeva,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

207 When I heard that Duryodhana,
tired and powerless,
deprived even of his chariot,
had escaped to a lake
to hide in its waters,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

208 What I heard that Krishna
along with the Pāṇḍavas
arrived at the lake
to insult Duryodhana
who never brooked affront,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

209 When I heard that they slew Duryodhana,
who was expert in club-fight,
unjustly, with clubs,
with counsel from Krishna,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

210 When I heard that Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman and others
were guilty of the horrible
slaughter of the Pāñcālas
and the sons of Draupadī
(murdered while sleeping),
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

211 When I heard that Aśvatthāman,
pursued by Bhīma,
shot the foremost of weapons
named Aisika at Uttarā,
wounding the baby Parīkṣit
in Uttarā's womb,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

212 When I heard that Brahmaśira,
Aśvatthāman's weapon,
was repulsed by Arjuna
with a weapon over which
he uttered the blessing 'Svasti',
and Aśvatthāman surrendered his head-jewel,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

213 When I heard that both Krishna and Dvaipāyana-Vyása
cursed Aśvatthāman for wounding the child in
Uttarā's womb,
I gave up all hope of victory, Sañjaya.

214 And I pity Gāndhārī.
All her children dead,
grandchildren, parents, brothers, relatives.
The Pāṇḍavas have fought
an excellent war: they have now
a kingdom without a rival.

215 Ten, I am told, in all
have survived this grief-giving war.
Three of us Kauravas.
And seven Pāṇḍavas.
Eighteen akṣauhiṇis of Kṣatriyas slaughtered.

216 Darkness surrounds me.
I feel faint. I am lost.
My senses fail. O Sūta,
my mind is confused."

217 With these words (continued Sauti) Dhṛtarāṣṭra moaned his fate. A profound sadness overcame him, and he lost his senses for a while. When he was revived, he spoke again to Sañjaya.

218 "I have no wish to live, Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "Let me take leave of life quickly. What is the point now of living?"

219 He sighed heavily like a serpent and fainted repeatedly (said Sauti); he babbled and wailed. Sañjaya, son of Gavalgaṇa, spoke to him wisely:

220 "Mahārāja, you have heard from Nārada and Vyāsa of very powerful men, men of remarkable industry,

221 Men of royal dynasties, of the highest qualities, skilled in the handling of divine weapons,

222 Men who fought just wars, conquered the world, performed the ritual sacrifices as ordained,

223 And in this manner, having obtained fame in this world, in the end nobly accepted death.

224 Vainya, the mahā-chariot-hero Sṛñjaya,
the mighty Suhotra, Rantideva, Kakṣivanta;

225 Bāhlika, Damana, Śaryāti, Śibi, Nala;
Foe-destroying Viśvāmitra, Ambariṣa of great strength;

226 Marutta, Manu, Ikṣvāku, Gaya, and Bharata;
Rāma the son of Daśaratha, Śaśabindu, Bhāgīratha;

227 Yayāti of auspicious deeds. When Śaibya grieved over the loss of his children, Nārada narrated to him the lives of these rājās.

228 Besides these, there were many other kings, mahā-chariot-heroes, even more powerful than these;

229 All these mahā-radiant mahātmās, died, like the others.

230 Pūru, Kuru, Yadu, Sura, glorious Viśvagaśva;

231 Vijaya, Vitihotra, Aṅga, Haya, Bṛhadguru,
Uśīnara, Kahola, Huhula, Dhruva;

232 Sahodhava, Pura, Vena, Sagara, Sankṛti, Nimi;
Ajeya, Paraśu, Puṇḍra, Śambhu, Devavrata, Anagha;

233 Devahvaya, Supratīma, Supratīka, Bṛhadratha;
Mahotsaha, Vinītātmā, Sukrata, and the king of Niśadha, Nala;

234 Satyavrata, Śāntabhāva, Sumitra, the ruler Subala;
Janujaṅgha, Anāraṇya, Priyabhṛtya, Śucivrata;

235 Bālabandhu, Niramarada, Ketuśṛṅga, Bṛhadbala;
Dhṛṣṭaketu, Bṛhatketu, Diptaketu, Niramaya;

236 Adhikṣu, Valala, Dhurta, Dhṛḍabandhu,
Dhṛḍayudha;
Mahāpurāṇasambhava, Pratyaṅga, Puraha; and
Śruti.

237 Lord! *Prabhu*! These and other rājās, hundreds and thousands of them, all powerful and wise like your sons,

238 Died like your sons, leaving behind huge wealth and lifetimes of pleasure.

239 These noble men, divinely brave, generous, faithful, pure, straightforward, and merciful, extolled by the poets of the Purāṇas, died.

240 Your sons were envious, selfish, passionate and vicious; but you are learned in the śāstras, prudent and wise;

241 And those who follow the advice of the śāstras are not likely to suffer grief or misfortune.

242 You cared for your sons, O Bharata descendant!
But Fate is fickle and ruthless.
This grief does you no credit.
Why grieve over the inevitable?

243 Who is so clever as to change fate?
Who steps beyond the decrees of karma?

244 Cosmic Time Kāla brings everything:
Being and non-being,
Pleasure and pain.

245 Kāla creates and Kāla destroys,
Kāla is the fire and Kāla the extinguisher,

246 Kāla is the god of good and evil.
Kāla cuts us down and Kāla creates anew.

247 Kāla is awake when all things sleep.
Kāla stands straight when all things fall.
Kāla shuts in all and will not be shut.

248 Is, was and shall be are Kāla's children.

O Reason! Be witness! Be stable!"

249 Sauti said: In this way Sañjaya, the son of Gavalgaṇa, comforted king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, grief-stricken at the deaths of his sons, and brought him peace of mind.

250 Using these facts, Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa composed the sacred Upaniṣad that has spread all over the world in the Purāṇas of learned and holy poets.

251 The study of the *Bhārata* is an act of faith. One line read with reverence washes away the reader's ill deeds.

252 This *Bhārata* describes gods, deva-ṛṣis, Brahmins, yakṣas and mahā-uraga nāgas.

253 It describes the eternal Vāsudeva-Krishna, who is true, just, pure and holy.

254 It describes the eternal Sanātana Brahmā, who is true light, whose deeds of divine glory are sung by wise men,

255 From whom flows non-being, and simultaneous being and non-being, who governs growth and progress, who is the source of birth, death and rebirth.

256 It describes the Adhyātmā, which has the qualities of the five elements, to which the word "unmanifested" or any word like it does not apply;

257 And which the ascetics, in deep Dhyāna-Yoga, see in their hearts as an image in a mirror.

258 The man who has faith and is steady in the pursuit of dharma will be freed of defects if he reads this parva of the *Bhārata*.

259 And no difficulties will trouble the man of faith who listens to this first section of the *Bhārata* from the beginning.

260 The man who repeats any part of the first section in the saṁdhyā-twilight of the morning and the saṁdhyā-twilight of the evening is freed, at the time of repetition, of all misdeeds committed in the day and night.

261 In the first section of the *Bhārata*
is truth and essence.
Like butter among curd,
like a Brahmin among men,

262 Like the ocean among lakes,
like the Āraṇyaka among the Vedas,
like nectar among medicines,
like the cow among animals,

263 Is the poem of Vyāsa among histories.
Whoever has a line from it recited
by a Brahmin at a *śrāddha*,
offers his ancestors food and drink
inexhaustible.

264 The Vedas are explained by the help of history and the Purāṇas.

265 But the Vedas fear men of small learning, for such men distort them. Let learned men recite only the *Bhārata* and be benefited.

266 Even the crime of men guilty of killing an embryo is cancelled if they recite the *Bhārata* at every change of the moon.

267 I repeat: Whoever reads the first section reads the whole *Bhārata*. The man who every day humbly hears the holy words of the epic,

268 Lives long, and finds heaven. Once upon a time, the gods met and placed the four Vedas at one end

269 And the *Bhārata* at the other end of the scale. The *Bhārata* was heavier.

270 From then on, it was called the *Mahābhārata*. It is greater than the Vedas in substance and seriousness;

271 It is called the *Mahābhārata* because in substance and seriousness it is superior. Whoever knows this is saved.

272 For tapasyā, study, pursuit of knowledge and wealth are all virtuous; it is abuse of them that makes them harmful.

SECTION TWO

1 The sages said, "Tell us all about the place you call Samanta-pañcaka."

2 Listen to my sacred words (replied Sauti). You are the best of men and most qualified to hear them.

3 When the Tretā-yuga ended and the Dvāpara began, the greatest of arms-wielders, Paraśurāma, exterminated all the Kṣatriyas of the world.

4 He destroyed them with his own prowess and created five lakes of blood at Samanta-pañcaka.

5 And, standing in the blood-waters, still blind with wrath, he offered oblations to the spirits of his ancestors.

6 Ṛcika and other ancestors appeared before him and said, "Rāma, blessed Paraśurāma, son of Bhṛgu, we are pleased

7 With your filial devotion and your prowess, and we bless you. Ask a boon, O mighty one!"

8 Paraśurāma said:
"Fathers, spirits of my ancestors,
if in any way I have pleased you,
grant me this boon:
Absolve me of the crime of killing Kṣatriyas in anger.

9 These lakes that I have made,
turn them into shrines,
the most sacred in the world."

10 The pitṛs replied:
"Go in peace,
It will be as you wish."

11 From then on the region around those five lakes of blood came to be known as Samanta-pañcaka.

12 For the wise have said that places should be known by auspicious associations that make them memorable.

13 At the end of the Dvāpara and the beginning of the Kalī-yuga, a great battle was fought at Samanta-pañcaka between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.

14 In that sacred defectless region, eighteen akṣauhiṇis of soldiers gathered for war.

15 They were killed to the last man in that place. That explains, O Brāhmins, its name: "The Final End".

16 That is all I have to say about that holy and lovely region, O best among Brahmins; it is a place whose name is celebrated in the three worlds.

17 The ṛṣis said: "Tell us, O Sūta's son, about the akṣauhiṇi that you just mentioned.

18 Teil us the number of foot and horse, chariot and elephant in an akṣauhiṇi. You know everything."

19 One chariot, one elephant, five foot-soldiers and three horsemen make a *patti* (replied Sauti),

20 Three *pattis* makes a *senāmukha*, three *senāmukhas* make a *gulma*.

21 Three *gulmas* make a *gana*, three *ganas* a *vāhini*, three *vāhinis* a *pritana*.

22 Three *pritanas* are a *camu*, three *camus* an *anikini*, and ten *anīkinīs* are described by those who know as an *akṣauhiṇi*.

23 O best of Brahmins, it has been calculated by mathematicians that there are, in one akṣauhiṇi,

24 Twentyone thousand eight hundred and seventy chariots, and the same number of elephants;

25 One hundred and nine thousand three hundred and fifty foot soldiers;

26 Sixty-five thousand six hundred and ten horses.

27 Those who are good at calculation will see that I have accurately described the numbers of an akṣauhiṇi,

28 And it was precisely on this basis that the eighteen akṣauhiṇis of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas were calculated.

29 Cosmic Time Kāla assembled them in this place;
Kāla made the Kauravas the cause;
Wonder-working Kāla killed them all.

30 Bhīṣma, skilled in weapons, fought for ten days;
Droṇa defended the Kaurava army for five days.

31 Karṇa, foe-slayer, fought for two days; Śalya for half a day; and for half a day was the fight with maces between Duryodhana and Bhīma.

32 When the day ended, Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa slaughtered the sleeping soldiers in Yudhiṣṭhira's camp.

33 O Śaunaka, the *Bhārata*, this greatest of stories, narrated here at your sacrifice, was earlier recited at the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya by the intelligent pupil of Vyāsa.

34 It describes in full the fame and valour of the kings of the world.

35 Three parvas in the beginning, the Pauṣya, Pauloma and Āstīka,

36 Are filled with exquisite descriptions in beautiful language.
As those who seek mokṣa
accept the path of renunciation,
so the wise accept the *Bhārata.*

37 As the Ātman among what should be known,
as life among things held most dear,

38 So is the *Bhārata* among histories and scriptures.
There is no story in the world
that does not depend on the *Bhārata.*

39 As the body cherishes the food it eats,
as an ambitious servant seeking promotion

40 Serves willingly a master of noble birth,
so all poets serve and cherish the *Bhārata.*

41 As vowels and consonants
make up the words of the Vedas,
the highest knowledge
goes to the making of this excellent epic.

42 Let me now give you an outline of the parvas in the *Bhārata,* for this history is full of subtleties, intricate logic, and Vedic profundities.

43 The first parva is the Anukramaṇikā; the second Saṁgraha; next the Pauloma, Pauṣya, Āstīka, Ādivaṁśāvataraṇa;

44 Then the wonderful and thrilling Saṁbhava; the Burning of the House of Lac; the Hiḍimba;

45 The Baka-vadha, the Caitraratha, the Svayaṁvara of Draupadī;

46 Then, after the rivals are defeated in righteous battle, the Marriage Parva; the Vidurāgamana, the Rājyalabha;

47 Then, the Parva of Arjuna's exile in the forest; then the Abduction of Subhadrā, the Haraṇa-hārika;

48 The Burning of the Khāṇḍava forest; the Meeting with Maya; the Sabhā-Parva, and Mantra-Parva;

49 The Killing of Jarāsandha; the Digvijaya; after the Digvijaya, the Rājasūyika;

50 Then the Arghābhiharaṇa; the Killing of Śiśupāla; then the Gambling, and Consequences of Gambling;

51 Then the Āraṇyaka; the Killing of Kirmīra; the Ārjunābhigamana; the Kairāta,

52 Which describes the fight between Arjuna and Śiva; then the Journey to Indra's Realm;

53 The sweet, touching and moral Tale of Nala; the Pilgrimage of the King of the Kauravas:

54 The Killing of Jaṭāsura; the Battle of the Yakṣas; and Ajāgara;

55 The Dilemma of Mārkaṇḍeya, and the Meeting of Draupadī and Satyabhāmā:

56 Ghoṣa-yātrā; the Dream of the Deer; Vṛhidrauṇikam-ākhyānām; the Anantaraṁ;

57 The Abduction of Draupadī; the Freeing of Jayadratha; the Story of Sāvitrī, celebrating the sanctity of marriage;

58 The Story of Rāma; then the Theft of the Ear-Rings;

59 The Āraṇya; the Virāṭa, where the Pāṇḍavas went and fulfilled their pledge;

60 The Slaughter of Kīcaka; the Cattle-Rustling; the Marriage of Abhimanyu to Virāṭa's daughter;

61 The Parva called Udyoga, a wonderful section; the Arrival of Sa ñjaya;

62 The Anxiety of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the Prajāgara; the Sanat-sujāta containing the secrets of religious philosophy;

63 The Yānasaṁdhi; the Arrival of Krishna; the story of Mālatī and Galava;

64 The stories of Sāvitrī, Vāmadeva, and Vainya; the Jamadagni, and of Sodaśarajika;

65 The Arrival of Krishna at Court; the Vidulā-putraśāsana: the Gathering of Armies; the Story of Sītā;

66 The Quarrel of Mahātmā Karṇa: the March of the Kaurava-Pāṇḍava Ranks to the Field of Battle;

67 The Numbering of Rathas and Atirathas; the Arrival of the Wrath-kindling Messenger, Ulūka;

68 The Story of Ambā; the Splendid Installation of Bhīṣma as Commander-in-Chief;

69 The Account of the Creation of Jambu and Bhūmi; the Account of the Varied Islands;

70 The Bhagavad-Gītā; the Death of Bhīṣma; the Installation of Droṇa; the Massacre of the Saṁśaptakas;

71 The Killing of Abhimanyu; the Vow of Arjuna: the Death of Jayadratha; the Killing of Ghaṭotkaca;

72 The Horripilating Parva of Droṇa's Death; the Use of the Nārāyaṇa Weapon;

73 The Karṇa Parva; the Śalya Parva; the Descent in the Lake and the Fight with Maces;

74 The Sārasvata Parva; the Descriptions of Tīrthas; the List of Genealogies; the Sauptika, giving details of disgraceful Kaurava deeds;

75 The Dread-inspiring Aiṣīka Parva; the Water-oblations to the Dead; the Wailing Women;

76 The Śrāddha-Parva, describing the funeral rites for the slain Kauravas; the Killing of Cārvāka, who came disguised as a Brāhmin;

77 The Coronation of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira; the Gṛha-pravibhāga;

78 The Śānti Parva; the Narration of Rāja-dharma; the Narration of Apa-dharma, and of Mokṣa-dharma;

79 The Śuka Praśna-āvigāmana; the Narration of Brahmā's Questions; the Origin of Durvāsas; the Meeting with Maya;

80 The Anuśāsana comes next; followed by the Ascent of Bhīṣma to Heaven;

81 The Defect-Absolving Horse Sacrifice; the Anu-gītā, full of religious philosophy;

82 The Retirement to the Āśrama; the Vision of the Dead Sons; the Arrival of Nārada;

83 The Mausala, filled with deeds of cruelty and terror; the Mahāprasthāna, and the Ascent to Heaven;

84 Then comes the Parva called the Khila Harivaṁśa which contains the Viṣṇu Parva, describing the Childhood of Krishna and the Killing of Kaṁsa;

85 Finally, there is the Parva of the Future, containing many prophecies. These are the hundred parvas of Mahātmā Vyāsa.

86 Placing them in eighteen sections, the son of Lomaharṣaṇa, the descendant of Sūta, recited them in the forest of Naimiṣa.

87 Only an abridgment is given here. The Ādi Parva contains Pauṣya, Pauloma, Āstīka, Ādivaṁśāvataraṇa;

88 Saṁbhava; The Burning of the Lacquer House; the Killings of Hiḍimba, Baka, and Caitraratha; the Svayamvara of Draupadī;

89 Her marriage after the defeat of the rivals in a just battle; the Arrival of Vidura; the Recovery of the Kingdom;

90 Arjuna's Forest Exile; the Abduction of Subhadrā; the Gift and Acceptance of the Marriage Dowry;

91 The Meeting with Maya. So much for the Ādi Parva. The Pauṣya describes the greatness of Uttaṅka.

92 The Pauloma Parva gives an account of Bhṛgu and his descendants. The Āstīka describes the birth of Garuḍa and the Nāgas;

93 The Churning of the Ocean; the Birth of Ucchaiḥśravas; and, finally, the Bharata Dynasty,

94 As described at the snake-sacrifice of rājā Parīkṣit. The Saṁbhava Parva narrates the births of various kings,

95 Sages and heroes; the Birth of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa; the partial incarnations of the gods;

96 The Birth of the Daityas, Dānavas, mighty Yakṣas, Gandharvas, of birds,

97 Of all creatures; and finally, of Śakuntalā's son by Duṣyanta at the āśrama of holy Kaṇva.

98 (The son's name Bharata is the name by which his descendants are known);

99 It also describes the glory of the Bhāgirathī; the Births of the Vasus in the House of Śāntanu; their Return to Heaven;

100 The Birth of the "Awesome" Bhīṣma; his Renunciation of Kingship; his Vow of Celibacy;

101 His Adherence to the Vow; his Rescue of Citrāṅgada; his Care of his Younger Brother after Citrāṅgada's Death;

102 His Installation of Vicitravīrya on the Throne; the Birth of Dharma as a Result of Aṇimāṇḍavya's Curse;

103 The Births of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, by the Blessing of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa; the Births of the Pāṇḍavas;

104 The Plot of Duryodhana to exile the Pāṇḍavas to Vāraṇāvata; and other plots of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra against the Pāṇḍavas;

105 The Advice given to Yudhiṣṭhira in the language of the *mlecchas* by Vidura, well-wisher of the Pāṇḍavas;

106 The Digging of the Tunnel following Vidura's Advice; the Burning of Purocana

107 And the sleeping Huntress with her five sons in the Lacquer House; the Forest-Meeting of the Pāṇḍavas with Hiḍimba;

108 The Killing of Hiḍimba by mighty Bhīma; the Birth of Ghaṭotkaca;

109 The Meeting of the Pāṇḍavas with Vyāsa; their Stay, on his advice, in a Brāhmin's house in Ekacakra,

110 In disguise; the Killing of Baka and the Astonishment of the People;

111 The Marvellous Births of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and Dhṛṣṭadyumna; hearing the Brāhmin bring news of the Svāyaṁvara, as asked by Vyāsa,

112 And with the desire of winning the hand of Draupadī, the Departure of the Pāṇḍavas to Pāñcāla;

113 The Victory of Arjuna over Aṅgāraparṇa on the bank of the Bhāgirathī; making peace with him, hearing from him

114 Accounts of Tapatī, Vasiṣṭha, and Aurva: the Arrival of the Pāṇḍava brothers at Pāñcāla:

115 The Piercing of the Target by Arjuna in the capital of Pāñcāla; the winning of Draupadī by Arjuna in front of all the kings of the world;

116 The Ensuing Battle and the Victory of Arjuna and Bhīma over Śalya, Karṇa, and the other incensed kings;

117 The Discovery of Balarāma and Krishna, from their mighty feats, that the Pāṇḍavas were brothers;

118 Their Arrival at the Potter's House where the brothers were staying; the Grief of Drupada, because Draupadī would be married to five husbands;

119 And as a result, the Wonderful Story of the Five Indras; the splendid, divinely organised marriage of Draupadī;

120 The Despatch of Vidura as envoy to the Pāṇḍavas by the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; his Arrival and Meeting with Krishna;

121 The Life of the Pāṇḍavas in Indraprastha; their Rule over half the kingdom; Nārada's rules for Draupadī's routine with the five Pāṇḍavas.

122 The histories of Sunda and Upasunda follow; the Departure of Arjuna to the forest according to his promise

123 Because he surprised Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī together in the room which he entered

124 To pick up his weapons in order to save the cattle of a Brāhmin; the Meeting of Arjuna and Ulūpī on the way.

125 The Birth of Babhrūvāhana; Accounts of Arjuna's Visits to many places of pilgrimage, the Release by Arjuna of the five celestial maidens

126 Changed into crocodiles by the curse of a mendicant Brāhmin; the Meeting of Arjuna and Krishna at the pilgrimage of Prabhāsa;

127 Arjuna's Carrying Away of Subhadrā, with Krishna's permission, in a chariot propelled by the driver's will;

128 Arjuna's Acceptance of Krishna's dowry and his return to Indraprastha; the Birth of Abhimanyu, of superhuman powers, in the womb of Subhadrā;

129 The Births of Draupadī's Children, the Pleasure Trip of Krishna and Arjuna to the banks of the Yamunā;

130 Their Acquisition of the famous bow, the Gāṇḍīva, and the cakra; the Burning of the Khāṇḍava forest; the saving of the lives of Maya and the snake;

131 The giving birth to a son by the sage Mandapāla in the womb of a bird called *śārṅgi*. All this is part of the Ādi Parva.

132 Mighty Vyāsa organised the Ādi Parva in two hundred and twentyseven sections.

133 These two hundred and twentyseven sections contain eight thousand eight hundred and eightyfour ślokas.

134 The second Parva, the Sabhā, is large and crowded. It describes the construction of the assembly hall by the Pāṇḍavas, and enumerates their retainers.

135 It contains a description of the Courts of the Lokapālas by Nārada, skilled in his knowledge of the heavenly regions; the preliminaries of the Rājasūya sacrifice, the Killing of Jarāsandha;

136 The Release by Vāsudeva-Krishna of the princes imprisoned by Jarāsandha in Girivraja; the Campaign of World Conquest by the Pāṇḍavas;

137 The Arrival of the Tribute-bringing Princes to the Rājasūya sacrifice; the Killing of Śiśupāla at the sacrifice, in connection with the *arghya*-ceremony;

138 Duryodhana's Displeasure and Envy at the sight of the colossal sacrificial preparations; Bhīma's Public Ridicule of Duryodhana;

139 The Preparations for the Dice-game; Yudhiṣṭhira's Defeat at the hands of cunning Śakuni;

140 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's Kindness towards Draupadī, tossing like a boat on the stormy waves of her ocean of sorrows;

141 Duryodhana's repeated attempts to entice Yudhiṣṭhira into a second dice-game;

142 And the Exile of Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers. These make up what Vyāsa describes as the Sabhā Parva.

143 This Parva has seventy-eight sections; it contains, O best of Brāhmins,

144 Two thousand five hundred and seven ślokas. After this comes the third Parva, called the Āraṇya.

145 It describes the Departure of the Pāṇḍavas to the forest, led by Yudhiṣṭhira followed by the citizens.

146 Yudhiṣṭhira's Propitiation of the sun-god, on the advice of Dhaumya, in order to ensure food and water for his company.

147 The Supply of inexhaustible Food as a result; the Expulsion of Vidura, constant well-wisher of his master;

148 Vidura's Coming to the Pāṇḍavas; his Return to Dhṛtarāṣṭra at Dhṛtaṛāṣṭra's request:

149 The Plot of Duryodhana, on Karṇa's instigation, to kill the Pāṇḍavas while they roamed in the forest;

150 The Appearance of Vyāsa and his attempt to dissuade wicked Duryodhana from pursuing the Pāṇḍavas in the forest; the History of Surabhī;

151 The arrival of Maitreya; his Instructions to Duryodhana, his Curse on Duryodhana;

152 The Slaying of Kirmīra by Bhīma; the Arrival of the Pāñcālas and Vṛṣṇis

153 After they heard of the Pāṇḍavas' defeat in the unfair game of dice; the Arrival of Krishna, and his calming of enraged Dhanañjaya-Arjuna;

154 The Lament of Draupadī before Mādhava-Krishna and the manner of Krishna's consoling her;

155 The Story of the Fall of Saubha (as the great ṛṣi describes it), the Departure of Krishna to Dvārakā with Subhadrā and her son;

156 Dhṛṣṭadyumna's Bringing of Draupadī's sons to Pāñcāla; the entry of the Pāṇḍavas inside the enchanting forest of Dvaita;

157 The Conversations of Bhīma, Draupadī, and Yudhiṣṭhira;

158 The Coming of Vyāsa to the Pāṇḍavas; the great *ṛṣi's* gift of the power of *pratismṛti to* Yudhiṣṭhira;

159 The Departure of Vyāsa; the Pāṇḍavas' retirement to the forest of Kāmyaka; the Wanderings of Arjuna of limitless prowess in quest of weapons;

160 His Encounter with Śiva who was disguised as a hunter; his Meeting with the Lokapālas, and his obtaining weapons from them;

161 His journey to the celestial regions of Indra, and the consequent anxiety of Dhṛtarāṣṭra;

162 The Grief of Yudhiṣṭhira after his meeting with the sage Bṛhadaśva.

163 In this Parva also is the touching, sacred story of Nala recommending the patience of Damayantī and the nobility of Nala;

164 The Acquisition by Yudhiṣṭhira of the tricks of dice-playing from the great sage; the arrival of *ṛṣi* Lomaśa from the celestial regions to where the Pāṇḍavas were;

165 The Information given to the noble Pāṇḍavas that their third brother was spending some time in the celestial regions;

166 The Pilgrimages of the Pāṇḍavas to various holy places, as requested by Arjuna; and the consequent attainment of great merit and virtue;

167 The Arrival of Nārada at the holy place called Pulastya; and the journey of the noble Pāṇḍavas to the same pilgrimage spot;

168 The Removal of Karṇa's flesh-ear-ornaments by Indra; the Great Sacrifice of Gaya;

169 The Story of Agastya, describing how he devoured the anti-god Vātāpi; and his relations with Lopāmudrā with the intention of having children;

170 The Story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga who was a celibate ascetic from childhood; the story of powerful Balarāma, son of Jamadagni,

171 Which also contains an account of the deaths of Kārta-vīrya and Haihaya; the Meeting of the Pāṇḍavas and Vṛṣṇis in the holy spot called Prabhāsa;

172 The Story of Sukanyā in which Bhṛgu's son, Cyavana, compelled the Aśvins to drink soma-juice at the sacrifice of king Śaryāti,

173 And in which Bhṛgu's son achieved perpetual youth; the career of king Māndhātā:

174 The Story of Prince Jantu, and how king Somaka sacrificed his only son, Jantu, and got a hundred other sons;

175 The enchanting Tale of the Hawk and the Dove; the Testing of king Śibi by Indra, Agni, and Dharma;

176 The Story of Aṣṭāvakra, which records the philosophical debate, at the yajña of Janaka,

177 Between Aṣṭāvakra, and the foremost logician Vandi, the son of Varuṇa;

178 The Defeat of Vandi, and the Release of the father of Aṣṭāvakra from the ocean; the Story of Yavakrīta; the Story of Raibhya;

179 The Departure of the Pāṇḍavas for Gandhamādana, and their stay in the Nārāyaṇa āśrama; Bhīma's Journey to Gandhamādana at the request of Draupadī;

180 His encounter, in a banana grove, with powerful Hanumān, the son of Pavana;

181 His Bath in the Pond and his destruction of its flowers while searching for the fragrant blossom Nalinī; his battle with rākṣasas,

182 Yakṣas, and Maṇimat, all terribly powerful; his Killing of the *asura* Jaṭa;

183 The Meeting with the sage Vṛṣaparva; the Departure of the Pāṇḍavas to the āśrama of Ārṣtiṣeṇa, and their stay there;

184 Draupadī's stirring up Bhīma against the Kauravas; the Ascent of Kailāsa by Bhīma, and his battle there

185 With the powerful yakṣas led by Maṇimat; the Meeting of the Pāṇḍavas with Vaiśrāvaṇa-Kubera, and the Meeting with Arjuna after he obtained divine weapons;

186 The Furious Battle between Arjuna and the Nivātakavacas, who lived in Hiraṇyapura;

187 Arjuna's Battles with the Paulomas and Kālakeyas, and how he destroyed them;

188 The Attempt by Arjuna to demonstrate his divine weapons to Yudhiṣṭhira; Nārada's Prevention of this;

189 The Descent of the Pāṇḍavas from Gandhamādana; the Seizure of Bhīma by the mountain-huge snake;

190 The Release of Bhīma after Yudhiṣṭhira had answered certain questions put to him by the snake;

191 The Return of the Pāṇḍavas to the Kāmyaka forest; the Arrival of Krishna to see

192 The sons of Pāṇḍu, the Arrival of *ṛṣi* Mārkaṇḍeya; his various didactic recitations;

193 The story of Pṛthu, son of Vena, as recited by the sage; also the stories of Sarasvatī and *ṛṣi* Tārkṣya;

194 The Story of Matsya: and many other old narratives retold by Mārkaṇḍeya;

195 The Stories of Indradyumna and Dhundumāra; the Story of the Chaste Wife; the History of Aṅgiras;

196 The Meeting and Conversation between Draupadī and Satyabhāmā; the Return of the Pāṇḍavas to the forest of Dvaita;

197 The Branding of the Calves; the Capture of Suyodhana-Duryodhana by the Gandharvas and Arjuna's rescue of the scoundrel as he was being carried away;

198 Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira's Dream of the Deer; the Return of the Pāṇḍavas to the Kāmayaka forest;

199 The Long Story of Vṛhidrauṇika, where also is the story of Durvāsas;

200 Jayadratha's Abduction of Draupadī from the āśrama; the Pursuit of the culprit by Bhīma,

201 Swift as the wind; the Cutting-off of Jayadratha's hair by Bhīma; the Long Story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*,

202 Which describes how Rāma used his prowess to kill Rāvaṇa; the Story of Sāvitrī;

203 The Deprivation of Karṇa's ear-ornaments by Indra, and the Gift of the Weapon called Śakti by Indra to Karṇa;

204 The Story called Āraṇya in which Dharma gives advice to his son Yudhiṣṭhira, and which describes the journey of the Pāṇḍavas westwards after they received a boon.

205 These are described in detail in the third parva called the Āraṇya.

206 The Parva contains two hundred and sixtynine divisions;

207 It has eleven thousand six hundred and sixtyfour ślokas. Then comes the large Virāṭa Parva.

208 It describes how the Pāṇḍavas came to the kingdom of Virāṭa and hid their weapons in a *śami* tree near a cremation ground in the outskirts of the city;

209 And how they entered the city and moved about in it disguised; how Bhīma slew the wicked Kīcaka

210 Who lusted for Draupadī; how Duryodhana tried to discover the secret of the disguised Pāṇḍavas

211 By ordering clever spies to look for them in every corner of the land, and how they failed in their mission.

212 It also describes the rustling of Virāṭa cattle by the Trigartas, and the fierce battle that followed;

213 The Capture of king Virāṭa by the enemy and his release by Bhīma; the Freeing of the Cattle by the Pāṇḍava Bhīma;

214 The Rustling of the Cattle again by the Kauravas and the Rout of their warriors by Arjuna, fighting singlehanded;

215 The Freeing of the Cattle by Arjuna; the Offer of Virāṭa to marry his daughter to foe-destroying Abhimanyu,

216 Son of Arjuna by Subhadrā. These are the contents of the large fourth Parva called the Virāṭa.

217 Mahā-ṛṣi Vyāsa composed this parva in sixtyseven sections;

218 It contains two thousand and fifty ślokas.

219 Listen to the contents of the fifth Parva, the Udyoga. When the Pāṇḍavas were living in Upaplavya,

220 All eager for battle, Arjuna and Duryodhana went to Krishna, each saying, "Be on my side in this war."

221 As soon as he heard these words, mahātmā Krishna replied, "O best among men, on one side is a non-fighting counsellor like me.

222 And on the other an akṣauhiṇi of soldiers – which would you prefer?" Not realising what was good for him, Duryodhana chose the soldiers.

223 Arjuna chose the Krishna who would not fight. Then follows an account of how Śalya the king of Madra came to the help of the Pāṇḍavas;

224 How, on the way, he was tricked by Duryodhana into granting him a boon, which was that Duryodhana would get Śalya's help in the war.

225 And how Śalya went to the Pāṇḍavas to console them by relating to them the story of Indra's victory over Vṛtra.

226 This is followed by the despatch of a purohita by the Pāṇḍavas to the Kauravas. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

227 Hearing the story of Indra's victory from the purohita, decided to send his own purohita, but finally despatched Sañjaya to negotiate with the Pāṇḍavas for peace terms.

228 Dhṛtarāṣṭra was supplied full reports about the Pāṇḍavas, their allies, Krishna, and others, as a result of which

229 He was restless and sleepless. Vidura then gave the wise king varied and sound advice.

230 At this time Sanatsujāta supplied many excellent truths of spiritual philosophy

231 To the disturbed and sorrowing king. Next morning, in the royal court, Sañjaya spoke

232 Of the deep friendship betwen Krishna and Arjuna. It was at this time that Krishna, out of kindness and wishing to eastablish peace,

233 Personally went to Hastināpura the Kaurava capital. Duryodhana rejected the offer of peace of Krishna,

234 An offer that would have benefited both parties. Then comes the Story of Dambhodbhava;

235 The Search for a Bridegroom by noble Mātali for his daughter; the History of the great sage Galava;

236 The Story of the training of the son of Vidulā; having heard of the evil designs of Karṇa and Duryodhana,

237 Krishna's Display of his yogic powers before the gathering of kings; Krishna's taking Karṇa in his chariot in order to give him sensible advice.

238 The Return of foe-destroying Krishna, from Hastināpura to Upaplavya,

239 And his Account to the Pāṇḍavas of all that happened. And when the foe-chastising Pāṇḍavas

240 Had heard everything, they consulted among themselves, and decided to prepare for war.

241 Then comes the March from Hastināpura of foot soldiers, cavalry, charioteers and elephants; the Review of Soldiers by both sides; the Despatch of Ulūka to the Pāṇḍavas by Duryodhana

242 As an envoy a day before the great battle; then the Review of the Different Charioteers; and finally, the Story of Ambā.

243 All this is described in the fifth parva of the *Bhārata* which is filled with material relating to peace and war.

244 The great Vyāsa, O maharṣis, composed this parva in one hundred and eightysix sections.

245 And the great Vyāsa included in it six thousand one hundred and ninetyeight ślokas.

246 Then follows the marvellous Bhīṣma Parva. In it Sañjaya gives an account of the creation of the territory of Jambu.

248 In this parva mahā-minded Vāsudeva-Krishna dispels the scruples of Pārtha-Arjuna by providing arguments from the philosophy of Mokṣa.

249 This also relates how selfless Krishna, seeing the Pāṇḍava army losing, leapt from his chariot,

250 And rushed fearless, whip in hand, to kill Bhīṣma. In this also Krishna rebukes Arjuna,

251 Master of the Gāṇḍīva bow and greatest of all warriors and weapon-wielders. In this the archer Arjuna, using Śikhaṇḍīn as a shield,

252 Pierces Bhīṣma with his sharpest arrows, toppling him out of his chariot, so that he lies on an arrow-bed.

253 This large parva is the sixth in the *Bhārata*. It consists of one hundred and seventeen sections.

254 It has five thousand eight hundred and eighty-four ślokas composed by Veda-wise Vyāsa.

255 It is followed by the parva called the Droṇa, which is filled with wonderful incidents.

256 It describes the Installation as commander-in-chief of Droṇa, the great guru; the Vow to take Yudhiṣṭhira prisoner,

257 Made by the supreme expert of weapons Droṇa in order to please Duryodhana; the Retreat of Arjuna before the Saṁśaptaka warriors;

258 Arjuna's Victory over Bhagadatta. a warrior who, on his elephant Supratīka, was like Indra himself;

259 The Killing of the young Abhimanyu, alone and helpless, by a gang of chariot warriors, among them Jayadratha;

260 After the death of Abhimanyu, Arjuna's slaughter of seven akṣauhiṇis of soldiers, and also of Jayadratha;

261 Then the Search for Pārtha-Arjuna by mighty Bhīma and the chariot-warrior Sātyaki, who, acting on orders from Yudhiṣṭhira,

262 Forced entry into the Kaurava ranks, a feat considered impossible even by the gods; the Destruction of the Saṁśaptakas.

263 The Droṇa Parva narrates the death of Alambuṣa, Śrutāyus, Jalasandha, Sāmadatti, Virāṭa, the mahā-chariot-warrior Drupada,

264 Ghaṭotkaca, and others; and how, losing his temper hearing of the death of his father Droṇa in battle, Aśvatthāman

265 Shot his gruesome missile Nārāyaṇa; and the story of Śiva-Rudra's glory, in connection with the Agni-missile;

266 The Arrival of Vyāsa, and the accounts by him of the glories of Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna.

267 These matters are given in detail in the seventh parva of the *Bhārata,* in which all the kings and heroic chiefs mentioned die.

268 This parva contains one hundred and seventy sections. The number of ślokas composed in it by the maharṣi,

269 The son of Parāśara, and the lord of great knowledge, Vyāsa, is eight thousand and nine hundred.

270 Then comes the magnificent parva called the Karṇa. It describes the Appointment of the rājā of Madra as Karṇa's charioteer,

271 The Story of the Death of the anti-god Tripura; the Bitter Quarrel between Karṇa and Śalya on the eve of battle,

272 And, as an insulting reference, the Story of the Swan and the Crow; the Death of Pāṇḍya at the hands of mahātmā Aśvatthāman;

273 The Death of Daṇḍasena; and of Daṇḍa; the Enormous Risk of Yudhiṣṭhira engaging in single combat with Karṇa

274 In front of all the assembled warriors; the Acrimonious Exchange between Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira;

275 Krishna's Attempt to calm down Arjuna; Bhīma's Fulfilment of his Vow by ripping open Duḥśāsana's chest

276 And drinking his blood on the battlefield; the Killing of Karṇa by Arjuna in single combat.

277 Those who know the *Bhārata* know this as the eighth parva. It contains sixtynine sections.

278 In this parva there are four thousand nine hundred and sixtyfour ślokas.

279 The magnificent parva called Śalya comes next. After the deaths of all the great warriors, the rājā of Madra was chosen commander.

280 A series of battles between different charioteers is described in it; then the deaths of the leading warriors among the Kauravas;

281 Then the Death of Śalya at the hands of Yudhiṣṭhira, and the Death of Śakuni at the hands of Sahadeva.

282 With just a handful of his soldiers surviving, Duryodhana escaped to a lake, made room for himself in its waters, and lay hidden there.

283 Some hunters brought Bhīma this news. By nature unable to stand insult, Duryodhana rose out of the lake,

284 Provoked by the taunts of Yudhiṣṭhira. Then comes a report of the club-duel between Bhīma and Duryodhana;

285 The Arrival of Balarāma at the site of the duel; the Sanctity of the river Sarasvatī;

286 The Progress of the Duel with Maces; the Smashing of Duryodhana's Thigh

287 By a fierce throw of the mace by Bhīma – all this is part of the wonderful ninth parva.

288 This parva contains fiftynine sections, and the number of ślokas in it, composed by the great Vyāsa,

289 Who spread the fame of the Kaurava dynasty, is three thousand two hundred and twenty.

290 I shall now give an account of the contents of the parva called Sauptika, full of frightful incidents. When the Pāṇḍavas had left,

291 The mahā-chariot-heroes Kṛtavarman, Kṛpa, and the son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman, came to the site of the duel, in the evening,

292 Where they saw Duryodhana lying on the ground, his thighs smashed and blood all over his body, Aśvatthāman, the fearfully angry son of Droṇa, vowed:

293 "This armour will not leave my body till I have killed all the Pāṇḍavas, including Dhṛṣṭadyumna, and all their allies."

294 Having said which, the three warriors left Duryodhana and entered the great forest just as the sun was setting.

295 While they rested under a giant banyan, they saw an owl kill a number of crows in swift succession.

296 Seeing this, Aśvatthāman was reminded of the death of his father, and decided to kill the sleeping Pāñcālas.

297 At the entrance of the camp, he found a hideous rākṣasa, whose head seemed to touch the skies, guarding the gate.

298 After the rākṣasa had repulsed all his weapons, Aśvatthāman decided to pacify the three-eyed sentinel by worshipping him.

299 Accompanied by Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman, he slipped into the camp and slaughtered all the sons of Draupadī,

300 All the Pāñcālas, including Dhṛṣṭadyumna and their relatives, as they slept unsuspecting

301 In their beds. Only Sātyaki and the five Pāṇḍavas managed to escape, with Krishna's help.

302 Dhṛṣṭadyumna's charioteer brought news to the Pāṇḍavas of the son of Droṇa's slaughter of the sleeping Pāñcālas. Draupadī, traumatised by the deaths of her father, brother, and sons,

303 Sat before her husbands, and vowed to die of fasting. Fearfully strong Bhīma, roused by her words,

304 Thought to please her. He quickly picked up his mace and rushed out in pursuit of the son of his guru Droṇa.

305 Afraid of Bhīma and impelled by fate, Aśvatthāman the son of Droṇa shot his divine weapon, crying, "Let this rid the world of the Pāṇḍavas!"

306 But Krishna nullified the words by saying, "This cannot be!" – and Arjuna repulsed the weapon with one of his own.

307 Seeing through Aśvatthāman's wicked motives, Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa cursed him; and he cursed Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa back.

308 The Pāṇḍavas plucked off the head-jewel of Aśvātthāman, and joyfully presented it to the distressed and grieving Draupadī.

309 All this is described in the tenth parva, the Sauptika, which mahātmā Vyāsa composed in eighteen sections.

310 The number of ślokas included in it by Vyāsa, the great knower of Brahmā-wisdom, is eight hundred and seventy.

311 The maharṣi Vyāsa united the Sauptika and the Aiṣīka stories in the single parva, after which is recited the deeply-moving parva known as the Strī.

312 Far-seeing insightful Dhṛtarāṣṭra, mourning the deaths of his sons, and stirred by revenge,

313 Crushed an iron statue of Bhīma placed before him by Krishna. But Vidura

314 Consoled the wise king by removing his worldly attachments with arguments concerning the final fulfilment of life – Mokṣa.

315 Then comes the description of the Journey of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the ladies of the palace to the field of battle;

316 The Lamentation of the Wives of the Dead Heroes; the Wrath of Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and their fainting;

317 The Spectacle before the Ladies of unreturning sons, brothers, and fathers sprawled on the field of battle;

318 The Consolation of wrathful Gāndhārī by Krishna, when she mourned the deaths of her sons and grandsons;

319 The Cremation of the Chiefs and Heroes by wise and virtuous Yudhiṣṭhira, with proper rituals.

320 When the ritual water was offered to the spirits of the dead princes, Kuntī acknowledged Karṇa as her son born in secret.

321 All this is described by ṛṣi Vyāsa in the eleventh parva, full of profound pathos.

322 To hear it is to be moved, if the heart has feeling; to read it is to weep, if the eye has tears.

323 It contains twenty-seven sections, and seven hundred and seventyfive ślokas.

324 It is followed by Śānti, the twelfth parva, which increases self-knowledge. It narrates the Grief of Yudhiṣṭhira

325 Because he killed fathers, brothers, sons, maternal uncles, and in-laws. It describes how Bhīṣma,

326 Supine on his bed of arrows, expounded the various dharmas, fit for study by rājās seeking knowledge.

327 To understand them is to attain supreme wisdom. It also clarifies the mystery of Mokṣa-Dharma.

328 The twelfth parva is the favourite of the wise; it contains three hundred and thirtynine sections.

329 Vyāsa, the wise son of Parāśara, O ṛṣis, composed this parva in fourteen thousand,

330 Seven hundred and thirtytwo ślokas. After this comes the excellent Anuśāsana Parva,

331 In which Yudhiṣṭira, rājā of the Kauravas, is reconciled to his grief when he hears the clear words of the son of Bhāgirathī-Gaṅgā: Bhīṣma.

332 It describes the rules of Dharma and Artha in detail; the rules of charity, and the benefits accruing;

333 The various merits following from various gift-givings; rules of conduct, the unsurpassed merit of truth;

334 The merits of Brāhmins, and of cattle; the mysteries of duties in relation to time and place.

335 All this is in the Anuśāsana Parva, which is filled with numerous examples. It also describes the Ascent of Bhīṣma to heaven.

336 It contains one hundred and fortysix sections,

337 And it has eight thousand ślokas. It is followed by the fourteenth parva, the Aśvamedhikā,

338 Which tells the Story of Samvarta and Marutta; the Discovery of the Golden Treasure; Parīkṣit's Still-birth,

339 Scorched by the divine missile; how Krishna revived him; Arjuna's Pursuit of the ritual horse let loose,

340 His Battles with various chiefs and princes who angrily seized it; Arjuna's Encounter with the son of Citrāṅgadā;

341 His Great Risk in the encounter with Babhruvāhana; and the Story of the Mongoose in the Horse-Sacrifice.

342 These form part of the wonderful parva called the Aśvamedhikā, which has one hundred and three sections,

343 And contains three thousand three hundred and twenty ślokas, composed by Vyāsa, a ṛṣi unsurpassed in wisdom.

344 The fifteenth parva is called the Āśramavāsika in which, abdicating his throne and accompanied by Gāndhārī and Vidura,

345 Dhṛtarāṣṭra leaves for the forest. Kunti sees this, and always dedicated to the service

346 Of her elders, she forsakes the kingdom of her sons, and follows the old royal couple.

347 This parva describes the King's Meeting with the Spirits of the Heroes, through Vyāsa's kindness;

348 After which, the old king gives up his grief and, with his wife, achieves the highest fruit of his good deeds. Always-devoted-to-dharma Vidura also achieves this.

349 The learned son of Gavalgaṇa, disciplined Sañjaya, foremost among ministers, achieves it too. Then comes the Meeting of the just Yudhiṣṭira with Nārada,

350 And Yudhiṣṭhira learns from him of the Destruction of the Vṛṣṇi race. All this is part of the wonderful Āśramavasika Parva.

351 It contains forty-two sections, and the mahā-ṛṣi composed in it

352 One thousand five hundred and six ślokas. The comes the terrifying Mausala Parva,

353 Which describes how, drugged with drink, the lion-hearted, battle-scarred heroes

354 Killed each other on the shores of the salt sea with blades of *eraka* grass which turned to lightning thunderbolts in their hands,

355 It describes how Balārama and Keśava-Krishna, after destroying their race, could not save themselves from the sway of all-destroying impartial Kāla.

356 It describes the Arrival of Arjuna at Dvārakā, and his Grief at seeing the desolate city devoid of Vṛṣṇis.

357 He performed the funeral rites of his maternal uncle Vāsudeva-Krishna, the foremost of the Yādavas, and saw the heroes of the Yādava race lying dead where they fell down drunk.

358 He cremated the bodies of Krishna and Balarāma and other chiefs of the Yādava race.

359 It describes the Journey of Arjuna from Dvārakā with the women, children, the old and the infirm of the remaining. Yādavas, and the calamity that overtook him. It describes the Disgrace of his Gāṇḍīva bow,

360 And the Failure of his other divine weapons. When he saw that he was unable to protect the Yādava ladies,

361 He took Vyāsa's advice and went to Yudhiṣṭhira, seeking his permission to become a saṁnyāsi.

362 These events form part of the Mausala Parva. It has eight sections,

363 And truth-knowing Vyāsa composed three hundred and and twenty ślokas in it. It is followed by the Mahāprasthānika, the seventeenth parva,

364 Which describes how the Pāṇḍavas, best among men, renounced their kingdom, and undertook with Draupadī the Great Final Journey.

365 They met Agni when they came to the sea of red waters. Asked by Agni, mahātmā Pārtha-Arjuna

366 Returned the divine Gāṇḍiva bow, and worshipped him. Yudhiṣṭhira continued the journey without once looking back

367 At Draupadī and his brothers who, one by one, dropped down dead. This is narrated in the seventeenth parva, the Mahāprasthānika,

368 It contains three sections, and truth-knowing Vyāsa composed three hundred and twenty ślokas in it.

369 You should know that the parva that follows is the marvellous one called the Svarga. It describes how, when the celestial chariot came to take him,

370 Yudhiṣṭhira refused to ascend it unless accompanied by the dog that had followed him. Seeing mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira's steadfast attachment to dharma,

371 Dharma gave up his dog-form and revealed himself to the king. Yudhiṣṭhira, reaching heaven, was deeply disturbed.

372 Because the divine messenger deceived him with a spectacle of hell, where the good king heard the pitiful lamentations of his brothers

373 Suffering in the region ruled by the laws of Yama. Dharma and Indra showed Yudhiṣṭhira this spectacle.

374 Yudhiṣṭhira, having bathed in the celestial Gaṅgā, discarded his body and gained the state his karma deserved;

375 And he lived happily, honoured by Indra and the gods. This is part of the eighteenth parva, as composed by the radiant ṛṣi Vyāsa.

376 It has five sections, and the great Vyāsa composed two hundred and nine ślokas in it.

377 The contents of the eighteen parvas have been thus summarised.

378 The Harivaṁśa and Bhaviṣya sections form the epilogue. In the Harivaṁśa the mahā- ṛṣi composed twelve thousand ślokas.

379 Such is the list of chapters as given in the Parvasaṁgraha Parva of the *Bhārata.*

380 Sauti continued :

Eighteen akṣauhiṇis of soldiers gathered
to fight the battle that lasted eighteen days.

381 A man may be learned in the Vedas,
the Vedāṅgas, and the Upaniṣads,
but if he does not know this epic,
he is not wise.

382 Vyāsa of vast wisdom has said:
This is a śāstra on Dharma, Artha, and Kāma.

383 Those who have listened to the *Bhārata*
will not listen to other stories;
those who have listened to the kokila
do not relish the cawing of crows

384 The five elements swaddle the three worlds.
This excellent poem swaddles poets' imaginations.

385 Even as the four kinds of creatures, O Brahmins,
depend on space for existence,
so all the Purāṇas
depend on the *Bhārata.*

386 Even as the senses
depend on subtleties of mind,
all action and virtue
depend on the *Bhārata.*

387 Even as the body
depends on the food it eats,
the stories of the world
depend on the *Bhārata*.

388 Even as servants eager for promotion
depend on noble masters,
so all poets
depend on the *Bhārata*.

389 Even as the householder's dharma
is not surpassed by other dharmas,
no poet
surpasses the *Bhārata*.

390 Work!
Throw off sloth. Stand up!
Fix your hearts on Dharma.
Dharma is your only friend in the next life.
Who is so clever as to keep
Wealth and women forever with him?
They pass away, they pass away.

391 Only the incomparable poem of Vyāsa brings virtue:
It is virtue and holiness itself.
It destroys demerit.
What need for the man who hears the *Bhārata*
to bathe in the sacred waters of the Puṣkara?

392 Whatever ill deed is committed in the day by the senses
is absolved in the evening if the *Bhārata* is read.

393 Whatever wrong is committed in the night
by thought, word, or deed,
is absolved in the twilight-saṁdhyā of the morning
if the *Bhārata* is read.

394 The man who gives to a Brahmin,
learned in the Vedas and other sciences,
one hundred cows with gold-plated horns,
and the man who listens daily
to the sacred stories in the *Bhārata*,
gain equal merit.

395 The wide ocean is crossed by small boats.
The large and excellent epic called the *Bhārata*
is easily grasped with the help of this parva.

SECTION THREE

1 Sauti continued: The son of Parīkṣit, Janamejaya, and his brothers were attending his long sacrifice on the field of Kurukṣetra.

2 He had three brothers, Śrutasena, Ugrasena, and Bhīmasena. While they were sitting at the sacrifice, the son of Saramā came to them.

3 The brothers of Janamejaya beat him mercilessly, and he ran weeping to his mother.

4 She saw him sobbing and asked, "Why are you crying? Has anyone hurt you?"

5 He replied to his mother's question, "The brothers of Janamejaya beat me up."

6 To which his mother said, "You must have done something wrong, or why would they beat you."

7 "I did nothing," he replied. "I didn't so much as look at the sacrificial ghee, let alone lick it."

8 This angered her greatly and, feeling sorry for her son, she went to the spot where Janamejaya and his brothers were performing the sacrifice.

9 And she spoke roughly to Janamejaya. "My son did nothing wrong. He didn't so much as look at your sacrificial ghee, let alone lick it. Why did you beat him?"

10 They did not say a word. "Very well," she said, "because you hurt my innocent son, may evil fall on you when you least expect it."

11 The curse of the celestial bitch Sarama filled Janamejaya with alarm and depression.

12 His sacrifice over, he returned to Hastināpura and tried his best to find a *purohita* who could neutralise the effects of the curse by absolving him of his misdeed.

13 One day Janamejaya, the son of Parīkṣit, was out hunting when he came, in one part of his dominion, on an āṣrama,

14 Where lived a ṛṣi called Śrutaśrava, who had a son Somaśrava, then engaged in the severest of tapasyā.

15 Janamejaya thought it right to appoint the son of the ṛṣi as his *purohita*,

16 So he paid his respects to the ṛṣi and said, "Revered one, bhagavan, permit your son to be my *purohita*."

17 To which the ṛṣi replied, "Janamejaya, my son is deep in tapasyā; he knows the Vedas; he was born in the womb of a snake who drank my semen.

18 He will be able to free you from all deeds except those committed against Mahādeva-Śiva.

19 But he has a firm principle : he will give to a Brahmin whatever is asked by the Brahmin. If this suits you, you can take him."

20 Janamejaya said to the ṛṣi, "What you say is acceptable to me."

21 He returned with his *purohita* to the capital, and said to his brothers: "Here is my *purohita*. Whatever he commands, you will obey without question."

22 The brothers agreed to do so. After instructing them, Janamejaya led an expedition against Takṣaśila and annexed that kingdom.

23 There was, around this time, another sage called Āyodaḥ-Dhaumyaḥ, who had three disciples, Upamanyu, Āruṇi, and Veda.

24 This ṛṣi asked one of them, Āruṇi of Pāñcāla, to go and plug a breach in a water-channel in a field.

25 Āruṇi went to the spot as ordered by his guru, but was unable to stop the waters.

26 Distressed because he could not carry out his guru's bidding, he thought out a plan, saying to himself, "This is the way to do it."

27 He went and squeezed himself into the dyke, plugging it with his body. The flooding stopped.

28 Some time later, Āyodaḥ-Dhaumyaḥ enquired about the whereabouts of Āruṇi of Pāñcāla, from the other disciples.

29 They replied, "Bhagavan, you sent him to plug the leak in the field's dyke." Dhaumyaḥ remembered and said, "Let us go and see where he is."

30 Reaching the spot, he shouted, " Āruṇi of Pāñcāla, where are you? Come here, my child."

31 Āruṇi heard his guru's voice, squeezed himself out of the dyke, and stood before him.

32 "Bhagavan," said Āruṇi, "finding no other way, I squeezed myself into the breach to stop the flooding. When you called, I pulled myself out, and let the waters escape. I namaskāra you, and await further orders."

33 The guru said, "Because you pulled yourself out and let the waters escape, you shall be known as Uddālaka, 'Water-Flow', as a token of your guru's favour.

34 Because you followed my bidding so carefully, you shall prosper.

35 All the Vedas will shine in you, all the Dharma-Śāstras also."

36 With this blessing, Āruṇi went away to the country of his heart. Another of Āyodaḥ-Dhaumyaḥ's disciples was Upamanyu,

37 To whom the guru said, "Go, my child, tend the cattle."

38 He tended the cows all day, as ordered, and returned in the evening to his guru's house, stood before him, and humbly honoured him.

39 He looked so wonderfully fit that his guru said, "My child Upamanyu, you are fat. Who looks after you?"

40 "Bhagavan," he replied, "I look after myself. I beg."

41 "Whatever alms you get must first be offered to me," replied his guru. Upamanyu went away and returned with alms which he gave to his guru,

42 And which the guru accepted. He then left to tend the cattle. In the evening he returned, stood before his guru, and venerated him.

43 He still looked well-fed. "Upamanyu, my child, I take from you everything you get as alms. How do you support yourself?" asked the guru.

44 To which Upamanyu replied, "Revered one, after I give you all my alms, I go and beg again, this time for myself."

45 The guru said, "Is this the way to obey a guru? You steal from other alms-receivers by doing what you do. Your action shows your greed."

46 Upamanyu accepted his guru's words, and went to look after the cattle. Again he stood before his guru and venerated him.

47 And Dhaumyaḥ saw him still looking well-fed, and said, "My child Upamanyu, I take from you everything you get as alms. You don't go begging a second time. How do you support yourself?"

48 To this question Upamanyu replied, "Revered one, I drink the milk from the cows." His guru asked, "Do you think it right to drink the milk without my permission?"

49 Accepting his guru's words, Upamanyu went away to tend the cattle. Again he stood before his guru, and venerated him.

50 He still looked well-fed, and the guru asked, "Upamanyu, my child, you do not live on alms, you do not beg a second time, you do not drink the milk from my cows. How do you support yourself?"

51 To this question his reply was: "I swallow the froth the calves spit out when sucking their mothers' teats."

52 "The calves must be kind indeed to spit out so much froth for you," his guru said. "Do you think you should take a share from their meal? It is not right that you should do so." Upamanyu agreed and went to tend the cattle.

53 And because his guru had prevented him, he did not beg alms, nor drink milk, nor feed on milk froth. Oppressed by hunger,

54 He chewed the leaves of the *arka*-tree. The pungent, bitter, raw and salt leaves affected his eyes; and he was blinded. Crawling his way back home, he fell into a pit.

55 The sun sank behind the western peaks, but Upamanyu did not return. The guru remarked on this to his disciples. They replied that he had gone to tend the cattle.

56 The guru said, "He is displeased because I stopped him from eating anything, and will return late. Let us go and find him." Accompanied by his pupils he went to the forest, and shouted! "Bhoḥ! Upamanyu, where are you? Come here, my child."

57 He heard the voice of his guru and replied, "I am here, in this pit." The guru asked, "How did you fall in this pit?"

58 "I ate the leaves of the *arka*-tree and was blinded," he replied, "and I fell into this pit."

59 "Pray to the Aśvins, the twin physicians of the gods," his guru advised, "and your sight will be restored." Upamanyu glorified the twin Asvins with the words of the Ṛg-Veda:

60 Born before the birth of creation,
First-born beings,
You who shine in the wondrous world of the five
elements!
O infinite ones!
You who flow with life's flow!
Whose ātman shines on life's flow!
Grant me this boon,
Grant me to know you
through knowledge and meditation.

61 Birds!
Birds with beautiful feathers!
Birds!
Birds sitting on the body of the tree!
Birds!
Birds free from the three guṇas!
Birds beyond compare!
Birds straddling the universe,
living in all living things!

62 Golden eagles!
Essences that vanish in the sky!
Undecaying, free from error!
Birds with golden beaks
Justly-wounding, ever-victorious!
Lords of Time!

63 Poets of the Sun!
Makers of the tapestries of the years,
Black-threaded night and white-threaded day!
Weavers of two ways,
Once for the *devas*, one for the *pitṛs*!
You!
Who free the time-trapped bird of life,
    thus bringing great joy!
How foolish are they who think
    of you as having forms,
O Formless Ones,
    how sense-deluded!

64 There are three hundred and sixty cows
Who are three hundred and sixty days.
They produce one calf,
    which is one year.
This calf –
    it creates!
    it destroys!
Those who seek Truth
    drink its milk,
Those who seek Truth
    accept different ways,
Knowing that the Aśvins
    have created this calf.

65 There is a wheel.
It has seven hundred and twenty spokes,
Which are days and nights.
Its hub is one year.
Its circumference is unending.
This wheel is full of delusion.
This wheel does not decay.
This wheel affects the creatures of this world.
This wheel affects the creatures of the other world.
O Aśvins,
You are the spinners of this wheel!

66 Time is a wheel, is a year
whose hub is six seasons.
It has twelve spokes,
for the twelve signs of the Zodiac.
Time is a wheel
spinning the fruits of karma.
Time is a wheel,
obeyed by the gods.

67 Because I am trapped,
O Aśvins,
Because I am tied to the wheel,
O Aśvins,
Because I suffer,
O Aśvins,
free me from the wheel!
Because
You are the world of five elements,
Because
You are the objects
enjoyed here and in the next world,
O Aśvins, listen to my prayer:
Free me of the world of five elements,
Because
Though you are the Supreme Brahmā,
You also have form and enjoy the world of the
senses.

68 The ten points of the universe
in the beginning of creation
are your creation;
The sun and the moon
in the firmament above
are your creation;
The *yajñas* of the ṛṣis
are performed to the sun
of your creation;

The gods and men
    enjoy the fruits of their deeds
        in your creation.

69 You mix the ten colours
    making all that we see –
        O Aśvins, I adore you!
From all that we see
    spring the worlds of gods and men –
        O Aśvins, I adore you!
I adore the sky, your handiwork,
        O Aśvins!

70 From you come the fruits of karma
    which trap even the gods,
For you are no fruits of karma,
    you are free . . .
Parents of all!
Male and female food-eaters,
Makers of semen and blood!
You suck mothers' nipples
As babies at the breast!
    O Aśvins,
    protect me,
    grant me my sight!

71 The Aśvins appeared before the adoring Upamanyu, and said, "Your devotion pleases us. Here is bread. Take it and eat it."

72 He replied, "Whatever you wish, O Aśvins, must be done. But I cannot take this bread without first offering it to my guru."

73 To which they said, "Once your guru invoked us, and we gave him bread, which he ate without offering it to his teacher. Do what he did."

74 "Forgive me, O Aśvins," said Upamanyu, "but I can not take this bread without first offering it to my guru."

75 "Your obedience to your guru has pleased us," the Aśvins said. "Your guru's teeth are made of black iron; yours shall made be of gold. Your sight will be restored to you."

76 He regained his sight, went to his guru, revered him, and told him what had happened. Pleased, his guru said, "You will indeed prosper, as the Aśvins have predicted.

77 The Vedas will shine on you. The Dharma Śāstras will shine on you." Such was the trial of Upamanyu.

78 The other pupil of Āyodaḥ-Dhaumyaḥ was Veda. One day his guru said to him, "Veda, my child, stay with me and serve me. It will be of benefit to you."

79 Veda agreed, stayed with his guru's family, and served him with great care. Like an ox bearing his owner's yoke, he bore heat and cold, hunger and thirst, without complaint. Many years passed before his guru was satisfied.

80 Veda achieved prosperity and knowledge as a result of his guru's approval. Such was the trial of Veda.

81 With his guru's permission, he became a householder himself after the completion of his studies.

82 He had three pupils under him in his house. But he never asked them to do him any favour, and he never demanded that they obey his commands.

83 Having suffered himself in the house of his guru, he preferred not to be strict with his pupils.

84 It so happened that, once, the two Kṣatriya kings, Janamejaya and Pauṣya, came to the house of Veda, and appointed him their teacher.

85 Once, when going out to supervise a sacrificial ceremony, he instructed Uttaṅka, one of his pupils, to look after his house.

86 "Uttaṅka," he said, "in my absence do whatever you think needs doing." Having given this advice, Veda left.

87 Uttaṅka lived in his guru's house, eager to be of service. One day the girls and women of the house came to him and said,

88 "Uttaṅka, you guru's wife is now in the state when sexual intercourse is most likely to give her a child. Your guru is not here; on his behalf do whatever needs to be done."

89 Uttaṅka replied to the women, "I do not think it proper for me to do this at the request of women. I was asked by my guru not to do anything that I did not think proper."

90 When his guru returned from his journey, he heard all that had happened, and was greatly pleased.

91 "Uttaṅka, my child, what would you like from me?" he asked. "You have served me nobly and faithfully. Our friendship has increased. I therefore give you leave to go. Go, my child, and prosper."

92 Uttaṅka replied, "Before I go, let me have the honour of doing something that you would like done.

93 He who gives instruction
without getting something,
and he who takes instruction
without giving something –
bitter hatred grows between them,
one of these two dies.

94 You have given me leave to go, but allow me to bring some dakṣiṇā for you." "In that case," said his guru, "you will have to wait a little."

95 Uttaṅka waited, and after some days said, "Order me to bring you whatever you wish as dakṣiṇā."

96 "Beloved Uttaṅka," replied his guru, "you have repeatedly asked me to order you to bring dakṣiṇā for me. Go to my wife; ask her." Uttaṅka went to her, and said, "My guru has given me leave to go, but I would like to bring you something as dakṣiṇā that pleases you, so that I may not leave a debtor.

97 Tell me what I should bring you as dakṣiṇā." She said, "Go to rājā Pauṣya, ask him for the earrings worn by his queen,

98 And bring them to me. Four days from today is an auspicious occasion, when I will appear, wearing those earrings, before the Brahmins and feed them. Do this, Uttaṅka. If you succeed, you will prosper. If not, you know what to expect."

99 Uttaṅka left. On the road he saw a bull of gigantic size with a gigantic man riding it. The man spoke to Uttaṅka:

100 "Eat this bull"s dung, Uttaṅka." But Uttaṅka refused.

101 "Don't hesitate," said the man, "eat it. Your guru ate it before."

102 Uttaṅka agreed, ate the bull-dung and drank the bull's urine, rose respectfully, washed his hands and mouth, and continued his journey.

103 He arrived at the palace, went to King Pauṣya seated on the throne, first greeted and then blessed him, and said:

104 "I stand before your majesty as a beggar." King Pauṣya returned his greetings, and said, "What can I do for you?"

105 "I come to you to ask for the queen's earrings to give as dakṣiṇā to my guru," replied Uttaṅka. "I hope your majesty will give them to me."

106 "Go to the inner apartment, and ask them from the queen herself," said Pauṣya. He went, but could not find her.

107 So he said to the king, "Is it right that you should misguide me? Your queen is not in the inner apartment; I could not find her."

108 Pauṣya thought a little and said, "Perhaps you are meal-defiled. My rānī is a chaste woman and cannot be seen by any defiled person. And she does not show herself to such a person."

109 Uttaṅka thought a little and replied, "You are right. I was in a hurry, and washed myself while walking." Pauṣya said, "That was a mistake. One cannot wash oneself while standing erect, or hurrying along."

110 Uttaṅka agreed. He squatted, faced the east, and carefully washed his hands and feet. Silently he thrice sipped dirt-free and bubble-free lukewarm water, gulping just enough to wet his intestines. He wiped his face twice. He touched his eyes, ears, and other body openings with water. Then he went to the inner apartment.

111 This time he saw the queen. She greeted him respectfully, and said, "You are welcome. What can I do for you?"

112 Uttaṅka replied, "I have come to ask for your earrings to give to my guru. You should not refuse me." She was pleased with his words, and thought him too pious a person to refuse. She took off her earrings, and handed them to him. "Watch over them carefully. The king of the *nāgas*, Takṣaka, has his eyes on them," she said.

113 "You need not fear, " replied Uttanka. "Takṣaka, king of serpents, cannot overcome me."

114 He took leave of the queen and went to King Pauṣya. "I am happy, your majesty," he said. Pauṣya replied,

115 "It is rarely that one finds the right person to give charity to. You are such an accomplished guest that I would like you to stay for a while here and perform a śrāddha."

116 "Yes. I will stay," replied Uttaṅka. "Have clean food and water readied soon." The king agreed, and made every effort to make Uttaṅka comfortable.

117 Uttaṅka noticed that the food brought before him was cold and had hair in it; he considered it unclean, and said, "Because you have given me unclean food, you will lose your sight."

118 "Because you suspect clean food to be unclean, you will never father children," countered Pauṣya.

119 Uttaṅka said, "First you offer me unclean food, then you curse me: it is highly improper. Look, see for yourself."

120 Pauṣya examined the food and found it cold and mixed with hair (for it had been cooked by a woman with unbraided tresses); and he began to pacify the ṛṣi Uttaṅka.

121 "Revered one, the food offered you is cold and has hair in it. It was not cooked carefully. I beg of you, pardon me. Let me not become blind."

122 "What I have said, will happen," replied Uttaṅka. "You will become blind; but you will soon recover sight. Grant that *your* curse does not affect me."

123 "I cannot revoke my curse," Pauṣya replied. "My anger has not disappeared yet. You do not know this.

124 A Brahmin's heart is butter-soft, though his words may be razor-edged. With a Kṣatriya it is the opposite: his words are new-churned butter, his heart a cutting tool.

125 That being so, I cannot take back my curse. I have a hard heart. You may go now." Uttaṅka said, "I proved to you that the food offered me was unclean. I accept your attempt at apology.

126 You said I would never be a father because I had declared the food unclean when it wasn't. But it *was* unclean. Your curse, therefore, is futile. I'm convinced of this."

127 Uttaṅka said this, and left, taking the earrings. He saw on the road a naked beggar coming his way. The beggar seemed to appear and vanish intermittently.

128 Placing the earrings on the ground, Uttaṅka went to urinate. The beggar rushed to the spot, picked them up, and ran away.

129 Uttaṅka finished his ablutions, namaskara-ed the gods and gurus, and rushed after the thief.

130 With great hardship, he overtook the man, and grappled with him. Takṣaka cast off his disguise as the beggar, assumed his real form, and scuttled inside a large hole in the ground.

131 He entered the realm of the nāgas, the Nāga-loka, and proceeded to his home. Uttaṅka recalled the words of the rānī; and pursued Takṣaka.

132 He prodded at the hole with a stick, but failed to make any progress. Seeing him helpless, Indra shot his thunderbolt,

133 With the words, "Go, help the Brahmin!" The bolt pierced the stick and widened the hole.

134 Uttaṅka entered the hole after the thunderbolt, and he saw the realm of the nāgas, with hundreds of palaces and beautiful mansions with balconies, domes and gateways, and splendid arenas for games and entertainments.

135 He chanted the following verses to please the nāgas:

Serpents! Subjects of Airāvata! Wind-swift brightening
Creatures! Brave in battle, cloud-armed, charged with lightning!

136 Children of Airāvata! You shine like the sun
in the sky!
Beautiful, many-formed! Earrings coloured
variously!

137 To the north of the Gaṅgā are the lands of the
nāgas,
Where often I have worshipped, singing their
sagas.

138 Who but Airāvata can walk in the heat of the
sun?
With Dhṛtarāṣṭra go twentyeight thousand nāgas,
one by one.

139 Near him, or far from him, one way or another,
I namaskāra you all, who have Airāvata for brother.

140 Kurukṣetra-dweller, Khāṇḍava-dweller Takṣaka,
brave nāga-king's
Worshipper am I (in order to recover the
earrings)!

141 Near Kurukṣetra, where the Ikṣumati river bends,
Lived Takṣaka and Aśvasena as close friends.

142 To Śrutasena, Takṣaka's younger brother, goes
my worship in words:
He lived in holy Mahaddyuman to become
one of the nāga lords.

143 Though he praised the important nāgas in this way, Uttaṅka did not get back his earrings. He began to think deeply.

144 He had worshipped them, yet the earrings were not returned. He looked around him and saw two women working a loom with a fine shuttle, weaving a piece of cloth; the loom held black and white threads. He saw six boys revolving it. He saw a man on a lovely horse. And he began to invoke them:

145 "This Wheel
Has twentyfour parts
On its circumference.
This Wheel
Has three hundred spokes.
Six boys
Revolve endlessly
This Wheel.

146 These girls
Are Nature,
Weaving weaving
Endlessly
A cloth
With black and white
Threads,
Creating
Worlds, millions
Of beings, who live
On these
Worlds.

147 Thunder-wielder!
World-saviour!
Vṛtra-slayer!
Namuci-slayer!
O Shining
Black-cloth
Weaver!
Truth and untruth
Revealer!

148 Rider of the
Nectar-born
Horse
Ocean-churned,
The horse

That is Agni
Different-formed!
Lord of the three worlds,
O Puraṁdara, O Viṣṇu,
O Supreme Being,
I bow to you! *Namo-astu*!"

149 The man with the horse said to Uttaṅka: "I am satisfied. What boon do you wish?"

150 "I want the nāgas brought under my power," replied Uttaṅka. The man said, "Blow into this horse."

151 Uttaṅka blew into the horse, and fierce flame and smoke issued from every aperture blown into,

152 Threatening to engulf the realm of the nāgas. Takṣaka rushed from the palace with the earrings, and said to Uttaṅka,

153 "Take back your earrings." Uttaṅka took them and thought:

154 *Today's the auspicious day chosen by my guru's wife. I am so far away. How will I ever get these to her in time?* He was deep in thought when the man said:

155 "Uttaṅka, mount this horse. He will take you in a flash to the house of your guru."

156 Uttaṅka nodded, climbed the horse, and was there in a flash. She had bathed, and was sitting and dressing her hair, thinking of putting a curse on Uttaṅka if he did not turn up,

157 When he entered and bowed before her respectfully. When he gave her the earrings, she said:

158 "You are welcome, Uttaṅka. You come at just the right time, my child. May good fortune go with you. May every wish of yours be granted."

159 Uttaṅka went and bowed before his guru, who said, "Uttaṅka, my child, you are welcome. What kept you away so long?"

160 "The king of the nāgas, Takṣaka, got in my way, and I had to make a journey to the realm of the nāgas," replied Uttaṅka.

161 "There I saw two girls weaving on a loom with black and white threads. Who are they?

162 I saw a wheel with twelve spokes, continually revolved by six boys. What does that mean? I saw a man – who is he?

163 On my way I saw a man riding a bull. He spoke to me gently, 'Eat this bull's dung, Uttaṅka. Your guru ate it before.'

164 I did as requested; ate the dung. Who is this man? I wish to be enlightened by you."

165 His guru replied: "The two girls you saw are Dhātā and Vidhātā. The black and white threads are night and day. The wheel with twelve spokes, revolved by six boys, is a year; the boys are the six seasons.

166 The man is Parjanya, Indra, the rain-deity. The horse is Agni. The bull you saw on the road is Airāvata, the rājā of elephants.

167 The bull rider is Indra. The bull's dung you ate is amṛta, the divine nectar of perfect immortality. Because you ate it you escaped death in the realm of the nāgas.

168 Bhagavān Indra is my sakhā, my loved-and-loving friend. He felt kindly towards you and did you this favour.

169 Mild-mannered Uttaṅka, you are now free to go. May good fortune go with you." Uttaṅka left; but in his heart there was bitter anger for Takṣaka; so he went to Hastināpura to take revenge.

170 As soon as the good Brahmin's son reached Hastināpura he went to the palace of Janamejaya,

171 Who had recently returned victorious from Takṣaśila. He saw the king surrounded by his ministers,

172 And at the right moment said, in a voice melodious and correctly accented,

173 "You spend your time, O noble king, like a child, when urgent and important matters await your attention."

174 King Janamejaya offered homage to the excellent Brahmin (continued Sauti) and said:

175 "I do what a Kṣatriya should, I look after my subjects. Tell me what else remains to be done that has brought you here."

176 The excellent Brahmin (said Sauti) told Janamejaya, best among kings, "It is a duty that concerns you intimately. Do it soon.

177 Your father, O king of kings, was killed by Takṣaka. Take revenge on that heinous snake.

178 This is the time! Fate decrees it. Go, O rājā, and avenge the death of your mahā-ātmaned father,

179 Innocent Parīkṣit, who guiltless was struck down, like a tree by lightning, reduced to the five elements, bitten by that vicious snake.

180 The foul Takṣaka, wickedest of snakes, drunk with his ego, needlessly stung him.

181 And when Kaśyapa came to revive your god-like father, protector of royal traditions, the evil snake drove him off.

182 Burn him to ashes! Burn him in the fire of a great snake-sacrifice! Do what is right, mahārāja! Order the sacrifice now!

183 It is the only way you can avenge your father's death. It is the only way you can do me a favour,

184 For that ill-ātmaned wretch blocked me in the pursuit of my duty once."

185 The king's anger (said Sauti) was roused against Takṣaka when he heard these words, as ghee rouses the sacrificial fire.

186 In the presence of his ministers, the grieving rājā gathered from Uttaṅka the facts of his father's departure to heaven.

187 And when all the details of his father's death were given to him, that Indra-among-rājās was overcome by pain and sorrow.

॥ महाभारत ॥

THE PAULOMA PARVA IN THE ĀDI PARVA

1/ Lomaharṣaṇa's son, Ugraśrava Sauti, learned in the Purāṇas, stood before the ṛṣis performing the twelve years' sacrifice of Kulāpati Śaunaka in the forest of Naimiṣa.

2/ (He knew the Purāṇas thoroughly, having studied them with great care). Joining his palms respectfully, he said, "What do you wish to hear, most reverend sirs? What shall I relate?"

3/ The ṛṣis replied: "We ask you, O son of Lomaharśaṇa, to tell us some excellent stories, to which we will listen eagerly.

4/ But Śaunaka, our noble guru, is at the moment attending before the sacred fire in the sacrifice room.

5/ He knows all the marvellous stories dealing with gods & demons. He knows the stories dealing with men, nāgas & gandharvas.

6/ The point is, Sauti, that he is the supervisor of this sacrifice: he is a competent, devoted, wise Brahmin, a master of the scriptures & Āraṇyakas;

7/ He is truthful, peace-loving, a faithful practiser of the strictest penances, a flesh-mortifying ṛṣi.

[P. Lal's calligraphy, Volume 4 of *The Mahābhārata,* March 1969]

SECTION FOUR

1 Lomaharṣaṇa's son, Ugraśrava Sauti, learned in the Purāṇas, stood before the ṛṣis performing the twelve years' sacrifice of Kulapati Śaunaka in the forest of Naimiṣa.

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4 But Śaunaka, our noble guru, is at the moment attending before the sacred fire in the sacrifice room.

5 He knows all the marvellous stories dealing with gods and anti-gods. He knows the stories dealing with men, nāgas and gandharvas.

6 The point is, Sauti, that he is the supervisor of this sacrifice: he is a competent, devoted, wise Brahmin, a master of the scriptures and Āraṇyakas;

7 He is truthful, peace-loving, a faithful practiser of the strictest tapasyā, a flesh-mortifying ṛṣi.

8 We respect him highly, and it is proper that we should wait until he arrives.

9 When he sits on the guru's seat there, he will himself ask you, and you will reply to him who is the best among the twice-born."

10 "Very well," said Sauti, "when the mahātmā ṛṣi is seated, I will tell sacred stories on whatever subjects please him."

11 When the noble Brahmin had completed his ritual duties, worshipping the gods with prayers and honouring the pitṛs with water-oblations, he came to the holy spot where Sauti sat before the assembly of strict-vowed ṛṣis.

12 He sat down in the midst of the ṛtviks and sadasyas, who also had returned from various rituals, and he said:

SECTION FIVE

1 "Son of Lomaharṣaṇa, your father knew all the Purāṇas perfectly – have you made them your study too?

2 The Purāṇas are filled with fascinating records of the lives and histories of the first generations of wise men; we heard them all recited by your father.

3 What I would specially like to hear is the chronicle of Bhṛgu. Tell us that; we are all ears."

4 Sauti replied : "What the noble Brahmins previously studied, what was studied and narrated by Vaiśampāyana,

5 What was studied by my father – has also been studied by me. Listen carefully, O descendant of Bhṛgu, to the chronicle of your race,

6 A race honoured by Indra and other gods, by the ṛṣis and the lords of the winds. The great, holy ṛṣī Bhṛgu was born in this race.

7 Noble muni, it will be my duty to tell you the history of this race as it is told in the Purāṇas. We are told that the great Bhṛgu

8 Was begot by self-born Svayambhu-Brahmā from the sacred fire at Varuṇa's sacrifice. Bhṛgu had a son he loved dearly, Cyavana.

9 Cyavana had a virtuous son, Pramati. Pramati had a son Ruru, by the apsarā Ghṛtāeī.

10 Ruru had a son Śunaka, by his wife Pramadvarā. He was your ancestor, a man deeply moral and learned in the Vedas,

11 Devoted to discipline, justly renowned, virtuous, truthful, immersed in śruti, regular in his food habits, most eminent among scripture-knowers."

12 "Why was the son of Bhṛgu called Cyavana?" asked Śaunaka. "I would like to know this in detail."

13 Bhṛgu had a wife he deeply loved (Sauti began). When she was pregnant,

14 One day, Bhṛgu left the chaste and lovely Pulomā at home and went to perform his ablutions.

15 Just then a rākṣasa called Puloman came to the ṛṣi's āśrama,

16 Entered, and saw the flawlessly lovely wife of Bhṛgu. Lust filled his head, depriving him of reason.

17 Lovely Pulomā gave her guest roots and fruits of the forest as hospitality.

18 He saw her and lusted for her. In his passion he decided to abduct the blameless lady.

19 "I have what I want!" he shouted, wishing to seize her and carry her away. (For the sweet-smiling lady had first been betrothed by her father to the rākṣasa.

20 But later he bestowed her on the ṛṣi Bhṛgu with the proper rituals; this insult rankled in the rākṣasa's mind,

21 And he waited for the chance to abduct her). He entered the room of the ritual fire where the flames were burning brightly.

22 And he addressed the sacred fire:

"O Agni!
Tell me,
Whose wife is she?

23 O mouth of the gods,
Agni,
Tell me, I implore you!
This lovely lady
Was pledged to me,

24 And later her father
Gave her to Bhṛgu,
Perfidious Bhṛgu.
Tell me, O Agni,
Is she Bhrgu's wife,
This lovely lady,
Or mine?

25 I wish to take her away
By force from the āśrama:
My heart is aflame
Because Bhṛgu has for wife
The girl who was mine."

26 Repeatedly did the rākṣasa address the sacred fire, asking the same question: *Was she Bhṛgu's wife*?

27 "O Agni,
You who live in the hearts
Of men, as witness
Of goodness and wickedness,
Give me the truth!

28 Whose wife is she?
Is not Bhṛgu guilty
Of taking what was mine
By right of first choice?

29 Advise me, Agni!
Tell me what is right!
For on your judgment
Will I leave her or take her.
Tell me the truth!"

30 The seven-flamed god Agni heard this, and was greatly perplexed (continued Sauti). He was afraid of speaking an untruth, and afraid that Bhṛgu might curse him. He said, speaking slowly:

31 "True: Pulomā was betrothed to you; still,
The sacred rituals and mantras you did not fulfil.

32 She was given as a gift by her father to Bhṛgu:
Her father did not choose to give her to you.

33 Bhṛgu married her on the wishes of her sire:
The rites were performed before the sacred fire.

34 This is the woman – I know her, and I
Know also: *No one is content with a lie.*"

SECTION SIX

1 As soon as he heard these words (continued Sauti), the rākṣasa assumed the form of a boar and, with the swiftness of wind, with the speed of thought, ran off with her.

2 In the agitation, Bhṛgu's son dropped from his mother's womb, for which reason he was named Cyavana or "the Dropped One."

3 Seeing the child drop dazzling from his mother's womb, the rākṣasa released her. He tripped, fell, and was reduced to ashes.

4 The lovely lady Pulomā, deeply distressed, picked up her child, and walked away.

5 And Brahmā, the Divine Father of all, saw the pure lady, her eyes full of tears.

6 And Brahmā, the Divine Father of all, consoled her as he would his own daughter-in-law, and from the tears that fell from her eyes there formed a great river.

7 The river followed the footsteps of the wife of the ṛṣi Bhṛgu, and Brahmā, the Divine Father of all, saw it follow her footsteps,

8 And named it himself, calling it Vadhūsārā "The Bride-Following Waters". It flows by Cyavana's āśrama.

9 Such was the birth of Cyavana of great tapasyā powers. When Bhṛgu saw his son and his wife, he asked her in a towering rage:

10 "Who told the rākṣasa about you? Who allowed this abduction? Sweet-smiling lady, how could he have known you were my wife?

11 Tell me who told him, that I in my anger may curse him!"

12 "The god Agni told him," Pulomā replied, "and I, like a female osprey, was ravished.

13 Only the divine dazzle of your son saved me. He left hold of me, stumbled, and was burnt to ashes."

14 Bhṛgu heard Pulomā say this, and he was furious. Enraged, he cursed Agni, saying, "May you be the all-devourer!"

SECTION SEVEN

1 Agni heard the curse (continued Sauti) and retorted angrily, “What do you mean, Brahmin? Don’t you think this is rash of you?

2 What wrong have I done? I spoke the truth, I followed dharma. He asked, and I had to speak the truth.

3 A witness who, asked about what he knows, deviates from the truth, ruins his ancestors and descendants to the seventh generation.

4 He does wrong, who knows the facts, and will not reveal them when questioned.

5 I could curse you back, if I did not have deep regard for Brahmins. Listen to me, Brahmin – you may know all that I am going to say, but I will repeat it:

6 My Yoga made me many-
Shaped, many-formed:
I am present in agnihotṛ
Sattra and Kriyā sacrifices.

7 From the Vedas when followed,
From the ghee that is poured
In my flame are appeased
The gods and the pitṛs.

8 The gods are the waters,
The pitṛs are the waters;
The gods and the pitṛs
Are equally entitled
To the sacrifices
Of Darśa and Paurṇamāsa.

9 The gods are the pitṛs,
The pitrs are the gods;
They are one and the same,
But worshipped separately
At the changes of the moon.

10 The gods and the pitṛs
Are dependent on me:
I am known as the mouth
Of the gods and the pitṛs.

11 At the full moon the gods,
At the new moon the pitṛs,
Are fed from my mouth
With the ghee I receive.
If I am their mouth,
How can I be
The all-devourer?"

12 Agni, after much reflection (continued Sauti), withdrew himself from all places; the daily *homa* of the twice-born, elaborate yajñas, and all other rituals.

13 Deprived of Auṁs, Vaṣaṭs, Svadhās and Svāhās, and other mantras, all creatures mourned the disappearance of fire.

14 The agitated ṛṣis approached the gods, and said: "Immaculate beings! Confusion has descended on the world; all sacrifices and rituals have stopped, for there is no fire.

15 Help us! Do what needs to be done. There is no time to lose." Together the gods and ṛṣis went to all-powerful Brahmā.

16 They recounted before him the story of the curse on Agni and the cessation of all religious ceremonies. "Lord of Good Fortune," they said, "Agni for some reason has been cursed.

17 Agni is the mouth of the gods and tastes the first portion of every gift offered in sacrifice. How can Agni, eater of the sacred ghee, become the All-Devourer?"

18 The Creator of the Universe summoned Agni before him. To Agni, co-eternal with him, and all-creator too, he said gently:

19 "Lord of creatures, Agni,
Destroyer and preserver
Of the three worlds,
Auspicious well-wisher
Of rituals and ceremonies,

20 Consumer of the sacred ghee,
Lord of all, Agni,
Give up this pettiness.
Do not act in a manner
That disturbs the sacred rites.

21 You in the world are pure,
All creatures depend on you:
You must not eat everything
Promiscuously, Agni.

22 What is vile in your body
Will devour everything alike,
But as all turns pure
When touched by the sun,

23 So will all turn pure
When passed through your flames,
Agni, Supreme Energy,
Self-born god, Agni.

24 Such being your power,
Make the ṛṣi's curse true:
Receive for yourself,
And receive for the gods:
Eat impure and pure."

25 Agni said to the Father of all, "So be it", and went away to carry out the will of the Supreme Lord.

26 The delighted gods and relieved ṛṣis returned to their respective abodes; the ṛṣis continued their rituals and sacrifices as before.

27 The gods in heaven rejoiced; the ṛṣis on earth rejoiced; and Agni rejoiced because he had found a way to escape the power of the curse.

28 That was how, in the past, Agni was cursed. This chronicle includes in it the story of Puloman's destruction and the story of the birth of Cyavana.

SECTION EIGHT

1 Sauti continued: Cyavana, son of Bhṛgu, and his wife Sukanyā had a shining, virile son called Pramati.

2 Pramati and his wife Ghṛtācī had a son called Ruru; Ruru and his wife Pramadvarā had a son called Śunaka.

3 Let me give you in detail the history of the shining and virile Ruru. Listen carefully.

4 In the faraway past, there was a ṛṣi called Sthūlakeśa, of enormous learning and tapasyā, devoted to the welfare of all creatures.

5 It was around this time that the apsarā Menakā became pregnant by the rājā of the gandharvas, Viśvāvasu.

6 When her time had come, O descendant of Bhṛgu, the apsarā Menakā gave birth to her baby near the āśrama of Sthūlakeśa,

7 And, abandoning the child near the bank of the river, the heartless and shameless Menakā went away.

8 The mahā-ṛṣi saw the baby lying in a lonely spot near the riverside,

9 Blazing with beauty, like a god's offspring. Sthūlakeśa, the great Brahmin, finest of munis, saw it was a girl,

10 And out of compassion took her home and reared her. The lovely child grew up in his āśrama;

11 And the mahā-ṛṣi, noble Sthūlakeśa, performed all the birth rituals, as laid down in the śāstras.

12 Because she excelled in beauty, in goodness, and in every other desirable quality, he named her Pramadvarā, the "supreme enchantress".

13 Ruru saw her in the āśrama and fell in love with her.

14 He asked his companions to inform his father Pramati of his love; and Pramati asked the noble Sthūlakeśa to bestow Pramadvarā on his son.

15 The ṛṣi betrothed the virgin Pramadvarā to Ruru, and fixed the wedding day when the star Bhagadaivata would be highest in the sky.

16 A few days before the date of her wedding, the lovely girl was playing with her friends,

17 When, her time having come, as fate would have it, she stepped on a snake; she did not see it lying coiled.

18 The snake, fulfilling the will of fate, dug its poisonous fangs into the careless girl.

19 Stung, she fainted, fell on the ground; her colour faded, her beauty withered.

20 Her hair in disarray, she presented a dismal sight to her friends and companions. So lovely to look at, alive, so painful to look at, dead.

21 She lay on the ground, like one asleep, the slim-waisted girl, looking even more compelling in death than in life.

22 Her father and the āśrama's ascetics saw her lying still, on the ground, like a discarded lotus.

23 Famous Brahmins came to mourn: Svastyātreya, Mahājana, Kuśika, Sañkhamekhala,

24 Uddālaka, Kaṭha, Śveta, Bhāradvāja, Kauṇaktsa, Ārṣtiṣeṇa, Gautama,

25 Pramati and Pramati's son Ruru. Seeing her lying dead of snake-bite, even the forest dwellers wept in compassion. Ruru, in deep sorrow, left.

SECTION NINE

1 While the other Brahmins sat around the dead Pramadvarā, Ruru entered a dense forest and sobbed uncontrollably.

2 Grief overpowered him; he wept aloud and piteously. He remembered his beloved Pramadvarā, and moaned:

3 "She lies on the bare ground,
Slim-bodied, grief-giving beauty!
No sight more painful than this.

4 If ever I have given in goodness,
If ever I have practised tapasyā,
If ever showed respect to gurus,
May the merits of these acts
Restore life to my love.

5 If ever I have disciplined my passions,
If ever been faithful to my vows,
May the lovely Pramadvarā
Rise from the ground.

6 If I have unshakeable bhakti for Viṣṇu-Krishna, Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna, Lord of the worlds Krishna, Krishna the Destroyer of wicked anti-gods, may my beloved Pramadvarā come to life."

7 Even as he mourned the loss of his bride, there came a messenger from heaven who said to him:

8 "Your grief-stricken words are in vain, Ruru:
None returns to this world whose days are over.

9 This poor daughter of an apsarā is dead,
Her days are over: no point in sorrowing now.

10 But the gods planned out a means beforehand:
If you wish, Pramadvarā may again be yours."

11 "O messenger of heaven, tell me," said Ruru," tell me of the gods' means. Help me. I will do whatever is required."

12 "Give half your life to her," the messenger said.
"Pamadvarā then will rise from the dead."

13 "Heaven-sent messenger, I give her half my life!
Let her rise like love and be my wife!"

14 The rājā, the gandharvas and the skilled messenger of heaven went to the god Dharma (continued Sauti) and said:

15 "Dharmarāja, if it pleases you, restore Ruru's bride to him with that part of his life that he has offered."

16 "If you wish it, messenger of heaven," Dharma replied, "you may revive Ruru's bride with that part of his life that he has offered."

17 He had hardly said this than Ruru's betrothed, the lovely Pramadvarā, rose, as if from sleep.

18 This gift to revive his beloved bride shortened Ruru's own life.

19 Their fathers married them with all the proper ceremonies, and the couple passed their days, deeply devoted to each other.

20 In this way Ruru found his hard-to-be-found wife, a lady lovely and luminous like lotus petals. And he vowed to exterminate the serpent race.

21 The very sight of a snake would fill him with anger, and he always killed it on the spot.

22 One day, inside a dense forest he saw a ḍuṇḍhuba snake lying stretched on the ground.

23 He raised his stick angrily, like a stick of death, to kill it. The ḍuṇḍhuba said to him:

24 "What harm have I done you, O ṛṣi, that you wish to kill me in anger?"

SECTION TEN

1 “My wife was like my life to me,” replied Ruru, “and a snake bit her, for which reason I took a terrible vow –

2 To kill every snake I come across. I will strike you and I will kill you.”

3 The ḍuṇḍhuba said, “One species of snake bites man: we ḍuṇḍhubas are different. You should not hate us.

4 You can tell right from wrong – you should not kill us – we suffer like the other snakes, but do not share their good fortune – in woe the same, in joy, different.”

5 Ruru, assured that the snake was really a harmless ḍuṇḍhuba and in mortal fear, refrained from killing it.

6 Ruru, possessor of the six attributes, comforted the snake, saying, “Tell me, snake, who are you, thus changed into a ḍuṇḍhuba?”

7 “I was formerly the ṛṣi Sahasrapati,” replied the ḍuṇḍhuba. “A Brahmin’s curse changed me into a snake.”

8 “But why were you cursed, O best among snakes?” asked Ruru. “And how long will the curse last?”

SECTION ELEVEN

1 "Long ago I had a friend named Khagama," the snake replied, "a truthful person who did much tapasyā and acquired great spiritual powers.

2 Out day, when he was performing a fire-sacrifice, I wove a mock snake out of grass blades and, as a joke, frightened him. He fainted.

3 Recovering consciousness, the truthful and austere ṛṣi shouted in anger:

4 'Because you frightened me with a harmless grass snake, I curse you to be a venomless serpent!'

5 I knew the strength of his spirit. So, with a fast-beating heart, I said to him,

6 Bowing low and joining both palms in añjali, 'I am your friend. I meant this only as a joke, to amuse you.

7 Forgive me. Revoke your curse!' He saw me repentant and was moved.

8 He replied, breathing heavily, and with some heat, 'What I have pronounced, will happen.

9 Listen, repentant one, to what I say, and keep it close to your heart:

10 When Ruru, the noble son of Pramati, appears, your curse shall fall away on seeing him.'

11 You are the same Ruru, son of Pramati. Let me regain my normal form and I will tell you something that will benefit you."

12 The noble Brahmin left his snake-body and returned to his original, lustrous form.

13 And he said to excellent Ruru:
'Ahiṁsā paramo dharma.
There is no greater dharma than this;
Never take life: be non-violent.'

14 Therefore should a Brahmin never take any creature's life; therefore do the scriptures say that a Brahmin should be non-violent.

15 Forgiveness, truthfulness, knowledge of the Vedas and all branches of the Vedas, benevolence, inspiring of confidence,

16 Memorising the Vedas – these are the duties of a Brahmin. The duties of a Kṣatriya are not yours.

17 The duties of a Kṣatriya are to rule, to administrate, to be strict. Listen to me, Ruru.

18 In the past, at the destructive snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya, some terrified snakes were rescued by a Brahmin,

19 Āstīka, learned in the Vedas and all branches of the Vedas, and consummate in spiritual strength."

SECTION TWELVE

1 "Why did Janamejaya deside to destroy the snakes, and how?" asked Ruru.

2 "Why were they rescued by the wise Brahmin Āstīka? I would like to know this."

3 "You will know the famous history of Āstīka from the Brahmins," said the ṛṣi, and disappeared.

4 Ruru ran after the ṛṣi (continued Sauti) but could not find him in the forest. He slumped, exhausted.

5 He felt confused; dizziness overcame him. His mind reverberated with the ṛṣi's words.

6 Recovering his senses, he hurried home and asked his father, and his father told him the story.

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 Śaunaka asked: "What made the finest among kings, Janamejaya, decide to exterminate the snake race by a snake sacrifice?

2 Sauti, tell us the full story. Why did the finest among the twice-born, and the greatest ascetic, Āstīka, rescue the snakes from total extermination?

3 Whose son was the monarch who performed the snake sacrifice? And whose son was Āstīka, among twice-born the best? This we would like to know."

4 "It's a long story, Āstīka's," Sauti replied. "But I shall give it in full, if you will listen."

5 "I am eager to hear it, the fascinating tale of the illustrious Brahmin Āstīka," said Śaunaka.

6 Sauti began: According to Brahmins, this tale, first recited by Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, is a Purāṇa. The dwellers of the Naimiṣa forest

7 First heard it, at their own request, from my learned father Lomaharṣaṇa, a disciple of Vyāsa.

8 I was present at the time. Because you have asked me, I will repeat the story exactly as I heard it then.

9 Listen to this defect-destroying story! Āstīka's father was as powerful as Prajāpati.

10 He was a brahmacārī, engaged in the strictest tapasyā, regular in food-habits, a ṛṣi in full control of sexual passion. His name was Jaratkāru.

11 He was the greatest of the Yāyāvaras; rigid-vowed, deeply religious, and a mighty ascetic. It so happened that this ṛṣi,

12 Making the sky his roof, roamed all over the world, visiting various holy places.

13 He practised difficult yoga, fed on air, fasting, and sometimes even going without sleep.

14 A burning-bright flame he roamed, till one day he saw his ancestors,

15 Hanging head downwards in a massive hole, their feet pointing skywards. He spoke to them:

16 "Why do you hang head downwards in this hole by a *vīraṇa* rope gnawed secretly by rats?"

17 "We are the strict-vowed ṛṣis of the Yāyāvara sect," his ancestors replied. "We have no children, so we sink lower and lower.

18 We have a descendant, Jaratkāru. Woe on us! – he has chosen a life of celibacy.

19 The fool – he will not marry, he will not have children. So we hang here: this is our fate.

20 We who have the means
Are like wretches who have none;
Shining stranger, friend,
Who are you who weeps for us?

21 Who are you, Brahmin,
Standing so near us,
Shining stranger,
Why do you weep for us?"

22 Jarakāru replied: "Fathers and grandfathers, I am Jaratkāru. Tell me what I should do."

23 "Marry," said the ancestors. "have children, that our line may not perish. Much merit will then accrue to us – and to you.

24 Not by the fruits of dharma,
not by stored-up penances,
does a man get the merit
he gets by becoming a father.

25 Child, we command you: Marry, have children. This will bring us the highest merit."

26 Jaratkāru replied: "For my own sake, neither will I marry, nor strive for money. For your sake, I will marry.

27 Under certain conditions, I will obey your command: I will marry at the right time, according to the prescribed rules.

28 Find me a bride with the same name as I have and friends who will willingly give her to me, as a gift.

29 But who will give his daughter to a poor man like me who will accept a wife only if she is given as alms?

30 But I will try, O my ancestors, to find such a girl. I promise it.

31 And I will have children, that you may be released and find the everlasting heaven called Śāśvata, and rejoice there."

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 The rigid-vowed Brahmin searched the world over, unsuccessfully, for a wife.

2 One day he entered a forest and, recalling the words of his ancestors, he asked thrice, in a soft voice, for a bride.

3 Vāsuki appeared and offered his sister to the ṛṣi. He hesitated, wondering if she was his namesake.

4 Mahā-ātmaned Jaratkāru said to himself: *I will marry no one who does not bear my name.*

5 Jaratkāru, ascetic of profound tapasyā, asked: "Tell me, O snake king, the name of your sister."

6 Vāsuki replied: "My sister's name, Jaratkāru, is also Jaratkāru. I give her to you: take the slim-waisted girl as wife. Best among the twice-born, I have kept her for you. Accept her."

7 He offered his lovely sister to Jaratkāru, who married her according to the rules of the scriptures.

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 In the distant past (Sauti went on), the mother of snakes had cursed her race, saying: "Agni, whose charioteer is the wind, will consume you at Janamejaya's sacrifice."

2 It was to neutralise this curse that the king of snakes married his sister to the mahātmā, strict-vowed ṛṣi.

3 Jaratkāru married her with the proper ceremonies, and had a noble son by her named Āstīka,

4 Who became a great ascetic, learned in the Vedas and the branches of the Vedas, impartial and serene, and who removed the apprehensions of his parents.

5 A long time passed. Then a descendant of the Pāṇḍavas, Parīkṣit, performed the prolongrd yajña known as the snake sacrifice, the *sarpa-sattra*.

6 When the sacrifice for the extermination of snakes began, the maharṣi Āstīka saved the nāgas,

7 His brothers, maternal uncles, and other snakes. A son was born to him, and in this way also he delivered his fathers.

8 He released the family's debts by severe tapasyā, rigid vows, and study of the Vedas. He worshipped the gods with yajñas and lavish dakṣiṇā-gifts.

9 He pleased the ṛṣis by his brahmacarya and his ancestors by having offspring. His debts to his ancestors discharged,

10 Strict-disciplined Jaratkāru went to the heaven of his ancestors. By having a son, Āstīka, and obtaining great spiritual merit, the finest among munis,

11 The noble Jaratkāru, after many years, went to heaven. This briefly, is the story of Āstīka. O best among Bhṛgus. What else would you like to hear?"

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 Śaunaka said, "Now that you have roused our curiosity, Sauti, we would like to hear from you in detail of the learned and virtuous Āstīka.

2 Gentle Sauti, your speech is sweet, rightly accented and delivered. It gives us pleasure. You speak like your father.

3 Your father was always ready to oblige us. Tell us the story as your father told it."

4 O long-lived ones (said Sauti), I will narrate the story of Āstīka as I heard it from my father.

5 In the Kṛta-yuga, the Golden Age, Prajāpati Dakṣa had two virtuous daughters of surpassing loveliness,

6 Kadrū and Vinatā, who became wives of ṛṣi Kaśyapa. Delighted with them, Kaśyapa, who was like Prajāpati himself, granted each a boon.

7 He was greatly pleased with them. When they learnt that their husband had granted each a blessing,

8 The lovely ladies were thrilled. Kadrū said, "I would like to be mother of a thousand nāgas all equal in splendour."

9 Vinatā said, "I would like to have two sons, excelling Kadrū's in strength, vitality, size and courage."

10 Her husband granted Kadrū's wish for a thousand sons; to Vinatā he said, "It will be so."

11 The grateful Vinatā had her wish granted that two splendidly powerful sons would be born to her.

12 Kadrū received her wish for a thousand sons. "Be careful during the pregnancy," warned Kaśyapa and went away to the forest, leaving behind two happy wives.

13 O best among Brahmins (continued Sauti), after a long time Kadrū brought forth a thousand eggs, and Vinatā two.

14 Their maidservants stored the eggs separately in heated pots. Five hundred years passed.

15 At the end of five hundred years, the eggs cracked open, and the sons of Kadrū emerged; but nothing happened with Vinata's eggs.

16 Ashamed, the jealous Vinatā broke open one of her eggs, and saw her child,

17 As an embryo with the top part developed, and the lower part fluid. The egg-child, angered, cursed its mother:

18 "Because you were jealous and prematurely cracked my egg-shell, and prevented me from growing, you will become a slave, mother.

19 But if you are patient for five hundred years and do not break open the other egg,

20 The radiant child born from it will deliver you from slavery, mother;

21 If you wish to have your son strong, take special care of that egg for five hundred years, mother."

22 Still cursing his mother, the child rose skywards. He is the charioter of the sun, O Brahmins,

23 Named Aruṇa seen early in the morning. And at the end of the appointed time, there emerged Garuḍa the snake-eater, from the other egg.

24 The moment he was born, this king of birds, the son of Vinatā, left his mother and soared on his wings to the sky, seeking the food allotted to him by the Great Provider, Vidhātā.

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 One day around this time (Sauti continued), the two sisters saw Ucchaiḥśravas coming towards them,

2 Ucchaiḥśravas, best among horses, worshipped by the gods, born from the ocean churned for amṛta,

3 Divine, graceful, ever-young, irresistibly strong, blessed with every auspicious mark, creation's masterpiece.

4 "Why and where did the gods churn the ocean for nectar, out of which, as you say, this lithe and lustrous horse emerged?" asked Śaunaka.

5 Sauti replied:
There is a mountain called Meru,
a flaming heap
of splendour.
Sunlight falls on it
and scatters
at the summit.

6 It is golden: it glitters:
gods and gandharvas
live on it.
It cannot be measured:
men of adharma
cannot come near it.

7 Divine herbs
of healing powers
shine on it.
Fearful beasts of prey
live in its cloud-
touching heights.

a gathering of gods
met on its summit
for consultation.

10/ They came in search
of amṛta,
these strict-vowed gods.
They discussed deeply,
till Nārāyaṇa
said to Brahmā:

11/ "Churn the ocean
with the gods
and the anti-gods,
till the drugs
and the nectar
are obtained,

12/ Till the gems
and the amṛta
are obtained,
O gods, churn
the ocean
for nectar."

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1/ Sauti continued:
There is a mountain called Mandara,
best among mountains,
with peaks like clouds,
and covered with creepers.

2/ Birds pour on it songs,
beasts of prey roam on it,
kinnaras, apsarās & gandharvas
often visit it.

[P. Lal's calligraphy, Volume 5 of *The Mahābhārata*, April 1969]

8 Mind cannot
conceive of it.
Trees and rivulets,
filled with echoing
birdsong, grace
its slopes.

9 It has stood high
for countless ages;
and once
a gathering of gods
met on its summit
for consultation.

10 They came in search
of amṛta,
these strict-vowed gods.
They discussed deeply,
till Nārāyaṇa
said to Brahmā:

11 "Churn the ocean
with the gods
and the anti-gods,
till the drugs
and the nectar
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SECTION EIGHTEEN

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There is a mountain called Mandara,
best among mountains,
with peaks like clouds,
and covered with creepers.

2 Birds pour on it songs,
beasts of prey roam on it,
kinnaras, apsarās and gandharvas
often visit it.

3 It rises
eleven thousand yojanas upwards;
It descends
eleven thousand yojanas downwards.

4 The gods, failing to uproot it, approached Brahmā and Viṣṇu, who were sitting together.

5 "We inplore you to find out a way for us," they said. "Uproot Mandara and help us."

6 "It will be done," replied Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Lotus-eyed Viṣṇu entrusted the difficult task to the king of snakes.

7 Guided by Viṣṇu and Brahmā, the mighty Śeṣa-nāga Ananta, king of snakes, uprooted

8 The entire mountain with all its forests and all the creatures in its forests.

9 The gods travelled with Ananta to the shores of the ocean, to whom they said, "We come, O ocean, to churn you for amṛta."

10 "Do so," the ocean replied, "but give me a share of the nectar. I will endure the chaos caused by the churning of my waters with Mandara."

11 The gods and anti-gods went to the kūrma-rājā tortoise-king and said, "Your task will be to place the mountain on your back."

12 The tortoise-king agreed, and Indra fastened the mountain on the tortoise's back with various instruments.

13 With Vāsuki as the rope and Mandara the churning rod, the gods in the faraway past churned the ocean

14 For amṛta. The anti-gods held Vāsuki by his hood and the gods by his tail.

15 And Ananta, representing Nārāyaṇa, periodically raised and lowered the snake's hood.

16 The tremendous friction caused by the gods' churning produced black smoky flaming vapours which issued from the mouth of Vāsuki.

17 Out of these vapours rose clouds, and lightning; and rain fell on the tired gods, refreshing them.

18 From the trees on the mountain-slopes fell flowers like rain on the gods and anti-gods, refreshing them.

19 Then: a great roar from the whirling Mandara, churned by the gods and anti-gods, like clouds roaring at the dissolution of the world.

20 Numberless sea-creatures crushed by the giant mountain, perishing in the salt waters;

21 Numberless creatures of the underworld and the watery world of Varuṇa, crushed by the mountain;

22 Numberless large trees, striking each other as Mandara whirled, uprooted, fell like birds, their trunks crushed in the salt waters;

23 Numberless fires from trees grazing each other blazed, making Mandara, like a black cloud, dazzle with lightning flashes,

24 Which struck lions and elephants and other creatures on the slopes, killing them instantly.

25 Then Indra, lord of the gods, drenched the burning mountain with heavy showers,

26 Till the juices and resins of the different trees mingled with the ocean's waters.

27 The gods drank the waters mixed with liquid essence of gold and nectar-propertied rasas, and became immortal.

28 And gradually the milky waters of the churned ocean mixed with rasas and resins, and produced ghee.

29 The gods came to wish-fulfilling Brahmā on his serene seat and said, "We are all exhausted, O Brahmā, and there is no sign of amṛta yet.

30 Only Nārayaṇa can help us: we gods and anti-gods have no strength to churn the ocean with the help of Mandara."

31 Brahmā said to Narāyāṇa: "If it pleases you, give them the strength to churn the ocean with the help of Mandara."

32 Nārayaṇa said : "Go, wise ones. You have the strength now to whirl the mountain and churn the ocean."

33 Hearing Nārāyaṇa's words, and inspired with new vigour, they recommenced their work.

34 Time passed.
Then rose from the occan
the mild and glistening
thousand-rayed moon Soma.

35 Then, from the ghee,
lotus-seated Śrī-Lakṣmī;
then Surādevī-wine
and the great white steed.

36 Then, from the ghee,
Kaustubha,
the celestial jewel on
Nārāyaṇa's chest.

37 Then, O Brahmin mahā-muni,
the pārijāta tree,
and Surabhī,
all-fulfilling cow.

38 Śrī, Surā, Moon, Horse,
swift as thought,
guided by Āditya
came to the gods.

39 Then Dhanvantari,
divine physician,
white vessel in hand
containing amṛta.

40 Seeing the wonder,
the Dānava anti-gods
with one voice shouted:
"OURS!"

41 Then the four-tusked, huge-bodied,
mahā-elephant Airāvata
whom the wielder of thunder,
Indra seized.

42 The churning continued
till poison arose, Kālakūṭā,
like smoke-filled fire,
and covered the earth.

43 The three worlds reeled
with the deadly fumes,
till Śiva drank the poison
at Brahmā's request.

44 Nīlakaṇṭha Śiva!
Blue-throated Śiva!
Maheśvara Śiva
in his Mantra-form!

45 And all these wonders
made the anti-gods despair,
and they fought with the gods
for Lakṣmī and amṛta.

46 With the help of māyā
Nārāyaṇa materialised
as a ravishing girl,
and flirted with the Dānavas,

47 Till the Dānavas and Daityas,
foolish anti-gods,
together placed the amṛta
in the hands of the girl.

SECTION NINETEEN

1 The anti-gods, in their finest armour, and brandishing a multitude of weapons, pursued the gods.

2 In the meantime, the mighty Lord Viṣṇu, accompanied by Nara, succeeded in spiriting away the amṛta from the anti-gods.

3 And all the hosts of gods, in the prevailing confusion, drank the amṛta they received from Viṣṇu.

4 While the gods were drinking the deeply-desired amṛta, an anti-god Dānava among them, disguised as a god, Rāhu, also drank it.

5 The amṛta had barely reached his throat when the sun-god Sūrya and the moon Soma informed the gods.

6 And Nārayāṇa cut off with his cakra the brilliantly-adorned head of the Dānava in the act of drinking.

7 The giant head of the anti-god, cakra-severed and fearfully-screaming, shot up into the sky like a tall mountain peak,

8 And his headless body stumbled, toppled and rolled on the ground, shaking mountains, forests and islands.

9 From that day began the quarrel between the head of Rāhu and Sūrya and Soma, and to this day Rāhu swallows Sūrya and Soma, the sun and the moon.

10 Hari-Nārāyaṇa discarded his disguise as the bewitching girl, and spread terror among the anti-gods by shooting various weapons at them.

11 In this way started the mahā-baṭtle between gods and anti-gods on the shores of the salt sea.

12 Thousands of sharp javelins, spears and other weapons were hurled by both sides.

13 Ripped by the cakra and wounded by swords, darts, and maces, the anti-gods lay on the ground and vomited blood.

14 Gold-bright heads, severed by the cakra, fell one after another in battle.

15 Blood-drenched, the anti-gods lay asprawl everywhere, like red-dyed mountain peaks.

16 When the sun rose red, pitiful cries "Hai! Hai!" were heard from all sides from the dying anti-gods.

17 And shouts of assailants and combatants smashing each other down across distances with missiles, or with fists at close quarters, filled the air.

18 "Cut him down!" "Pierce him!" "Kill!" "Forward!" – everywhere these fearful war cries.

19 The battle was still raging fiercely when Nara and Nārāyaṇa appeared.

20 Noticing Nara carrying the divine bow, Nārāyaṇa thought of his own weapon, the Dānava-destroying cakra.

21 No sooner had he thought of it than the foe-destroying cakra-discus Sudarśana descended from the sky; it shone like Agni.

22 And fearfully-powerful Acyuta-Nārāyaṇa, flame-bright, with arms like an elephant's trunk, picking it up, hurled it, flame-bright and dreadful, marvellously lustrous, capable of annihilating entire towns.

23 Hurled by the hand of Nārāyaṇa, and blazing like the fire at the dissolution of the worlds, the discus sped everywhere, slaughtering thousands of Dānavas and Daityas.

24 If flashed like fire,
and consumed them;
It drank their blood
like a goblin;
It raced through the air,
killing as it went.

25 And the mighty anti-gods, white like clouds emptied of rain, fled to the sky, from where they flung thousands of mountains on the heads of the gods.

26 The dreadful flat-topped mountains, forest-covered, fell from the sky like cloud- clusters, colliding and producing deafeming explosions.

27 With thousands of warriors shouting on the battlefield, and forest-covered mountains crashing down, the earth and her forests trembled.

28 Then appeared divine Nara where the gods and anti-gods were fighting, and with gold-tipped arrows he crumbled the mountains, smothering the sky with dust.

29 Routed by the gods and by the dreadful cakra that scoured the field like a fierce flame, the anti-gods retreated, some into the earth's bowels, others to the salt sea.

30 The victorious gods respectfully replaced Mandara on its base, and returned with the amṛta to their abode, rending the sky with their shouts.

31 Returning to heaven, they celebrated their victory with great pomp, and stored the amṛta carefully.

32 And, at the opportune time, Indra and the other gods handed over the pot of amṛta to diademed Nara for safe-keeping.

SECTION TWENTY

1 Sauti said: That is how the nectar was churned out of the ocean, and the way in which the exceedingly handsome and virile horse was produced.

2 About this horse, Kadrū asked Vinatā, "Tell me, sister, quickly, what colour was Uccaiḥśravas?"

3 Vinatā replied: "White, sister, is the colour of the king of horses. What do you think? You tell me – let us bet on it!"

4 "Sweet-smiling lady," replied Kadrū, "I think his tail is black. Let this be our bet – the one who's wrong will become the other's slave."

5 They wagered that the loser would serve the winner (continued Sauti), and went home saying, "We'll inspect the horse tomorrow."

6 Kadrū thought of a trick: she ordered her thousand sons to transform themselves into black hair,

7 And immediately cover the horse's tail, so that she might not become a slave. When her snake-sons refused, she cursed them:

8 "May Agni consume all of you who refuse, in the snake-sacrifice planned by rājarṣi Janamejaya of the Pāṇḍava race."

9 Brahmā heard this disproportionately cruel curse of Kadrū, who pronounced it impelled by fate,

10 But, because the snake-race had multiplied enormously, out of compassion for other creatures he, and the other gods, sanctioned the curse.

11 "Poison most malignant,
Strength most terrible,
They bite without warning.

12 Their prowess is notorious.
The curse of their mother
Will benefit other creatures.

13 Fate is ruthless to those
Who are ruthless to others."
With these words the gods
Praised Kadrū highly.

14 Summoning Kaśyapa, Brahmā said, "Defectless foe-subduer, your children, the giant-bodied, eager-to-sting, venomous snakes,

15 Have been cursed by their mother. Let this not, my son, be a source of grief to you in any way.

16 The holocaust of snakes has been ordained in the Purāṇas." The Creator of the worlds blessed Kaśyapa and granted him the power to neutralise poison.

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 Sauti said: O tapasyā-rich ṛṣis, night passed, the sun rose, and the two sisters, Kadrū and Vinatā,

2 Having laid a wager involving slavery, hurried impatiently to inspect the horse Uccaiḥśravas.

3 An ocean of whales,
Fish that swallow whales,
Makaras, and thousands
Upon thousands of sea-creatures;

4 Fierce, monstrous,
Dark sea-animals,
Allowing none near;
Crocodiles, tortoises;

5 All kinds of gems;
The home of Varuṇa;
The palace of the nāgas;
The lord of rivers;

6 Home of undersea flames;
Friend of the antigods;
Terror of creatures;
Undecaying receptacle;

7 Holy, god-beneficent;
Source of amṛta;
Infinite, inconceivable;
Sacred, full of marvels;

8 Roaring with the voices
Of invisible sea-animals;
Breeder of whirlpools;
Terror-striking creature;

9 Rolling high with winds
Of storm and anger;
Dancing with wave-
uplifted hands;

10 Heaving endlessly with
Moon-produced billows;
Pāñcajanya's father;
Treasure-house of jewels;

11 Subdued in the past
By powerful Govinda
In his boar-incarnation
When he raised the earth;

12 Baffler of ṛṣi Atri
Who tried for a hundred years
To plumb its deeper-
than-the-depths nether-world;

13 Bed of lotus-
navelled Viṣṇu at each yuga
Reposing in the peace of
Cosmic sādhanā;

14 Refuge of the mountain
Maināka from falling thunder,
Hide-out of the anti-gods
After the terrible battle;

15 Giver of ghee to the fire
From the mouth of Vaḍavā;
Limitless, fathomless,
Vast lord of rivers;

16 Thousands of rival rivers
Rushing for its love –
They saw. Always full,
Always wave-dancing;

17 Reverberating with the roars
Of *makaras* and *timis* –
They saw: this space-vast,
Unfathomable reservoir.

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Sauti said: The nāgas discussed the matter and, afraid that disobedience would rouse their mother to withhold her love and burn them all, decided to follow her commands.

2 If pleased, they thought, she might even revoke the curse. "We will make the horse's tail black," they promised.

3 It is believed that they turned themselves into hairs on the horse's tail. The co-wives had already laid the wager;

4 Both Kadrū and Vinatā went expectantly to the other side of the great ocean.

5 The daughters of Dakṣa, Kadrū and Vinatā, on the way, saw the normally unruffled ocean

6 In a state of tremendous fury, roaring with *makaras* and monster-whales,

7 And other sea-creatures, most of gigantic size. It seemed impossible to cross; it was terrifying;

8 This treasure-house of jewels, home of Varuṇa, beautiful abode of the nāgas, this lord of all rivers,

9 This place of subterranean fire, home of the anti-gods and demons, reservoir of all waters,

10 This holy receptacle of the amṛta of the gods, this immeasurable and unimaginable house of waters,

11 Into which entered thousands of rivers, ruffling its surface into dancing waves,

12 This profound, liquid ocean, sky-vast, lit with submarine flames, and always roaring. And they hurriedly passed over it.

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 Sauti continued: Swift Kadrū and her sister Vinatā crossed the ocean and came to the place where the horse was.

2 They saw him, the fleetest and foremost horse, moon-white, and black-haired.

3 Kadrū pointed to the black hairs in the tail, and made the dejected Vinatā her slave.

4 This was how Vinatā, losing her wager, was taken into slavery. Deep sorrow overwhelmed her.

5 In the meantime, breaking out of the egg without any help from his mother, splendid Garuḍa was born.

6 His radiance lit up the points of the universe; he was strong, able to change shape at will, empowered to travel anywhere, and he could summon whatever energy he wished.

7 His was the terrible splendour of a mass of fire – a splendour like that of the flames at the end of a yuga. His eyes flashed like lightning.

8 His body expanded on birth, and the colossal bird sped to the sky, fiercely screaming like a second ocean-fire.

9 The gods saw him, and sought Agni-Vibhāvasu's protection. They bowed to the seated god of manifold forms, and prayed:

10 "O Agni!
Do not let your body expand!
Will you devour us?
Look, everywhere a mass of flames!"

11 Agni replied:
"Victors of the anti-gods,
You are mistaken.
This is the great Garuḍa,
Rivalling me in splendour.

12 That energy is his
For Vinatā's benefit.
His fierce effulgence
Has bewildered you.

13 He is Kaśyapa's son,
Destroyer of the nāgas,
Foe of rākṣasas and Daityas
But friend of the gods.

14 There is no need
To fear him at all.
Come with me.
Let us together meet him."

15 Sauti continued: The gods and ṛṣis went to meet Garuḍa, and spoke to him from a distance.

16 The gods said:
"Great lord of birds!
Ṛṣi!
Consumer of the largest portion of
sacrifices!
God!
Lord of the hot-rayed Sun!
Prajāpati!
Parameṣṭhin!

17 Indra!
Horse-necked Viṣṇu!
Lord of the Universe!
Four-faced Brahmā!
Lotus-born Brahmā!
God of Fire!
God of Wind!

18 Creator and Destroyer!
Viṣṇu, Lord God!
Truth above all truths!
Fearless, changeless glory!
World-illusion!

19 Energy of the sun!
Power of the mind!
Ocean of strength!
Unconquerable protector!
Master of purity!
Lord of wrath!
Transcender of the dark senses!

20 Architect of all!
Doer of good deeds!
All that was not and all that is!
Pure knowledge,
Revealing like the sun
This breathing and unbreathing world!

21 Darkener of sun-splendour!
Destroyer of all!
Perishable and Imperishable!
God
Whose fire-fierceness
Consumes all life,
Like the sun does in anger!

22 Fire at yuga-end
Are you,
Destroying all creation!
Mover in the sky
Are you,
O energetic Fire!
King of birds,
We come to you,
Protect us!

23 Blinding like lightning
Are you,
Dispeller of darkness!
Mighty Garuḍa,
Cloud-reacher!
Cause and effect
Are you,
O dispenser of grace,
Unconquerably puissant!

24 The worlds are hot
Like heated gold!
Protect the gods,
O mighty one –
Frightened they fly
In all directions.

25 Bird-son of Kaśyapa,
The mahātmā ṛṣi,
Lord of all,
Give up your anger
Have mercy on the worlds!
Supreme lord, be merciful,
Save us!

26 The ten points, the skies,
Heaven, earth, our hearts
Tremble, O bird,
Hearing your cry
Like the scream of thunder!
Contract your body,
O fiery one!

27 Seeing your radiance,
Like the god of death's,
We tremble,
Our hearts tremble,
Our peace is gone.

28 King of birds,
Listen to our prayer!
Auspicious one,
Give us fortune,
Grant us joy and glory!”

Adored by the gods and ṛṣis, the lovely-plumaged bird reduced his energy and radiance.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 Sauti said : He heard others, and he saw himself; and the lovely-plumaged bird diminished his size.

2 "Let none be afraid of my body," said Garuḍa. "Because the sight of it frightens you, I will make myself smaller."

3 Sauti said: The world-ranging, energy-willing bird placed his brother Aruṇa on his back, and flew from his father's home to his mother's,

4 On the other side of the ocean. He deposited resplendent Aruṇa in the eastern region, for the sun had determined to burn the worlds with his fierce rays.

5 Ruru asked: "Why did the noble Sun resolve to burn the worlds? What wrong did the gods do, to make him so angry?"

6 Sauti replied: From the time the Sun and the Moon exposed Rāhu in the act of drinking amṛta, Rāhu bore a deep grudge against them.

7 The Sun, furious when Rāhu began to devour him, thought: *Because I wanted to help the gods, Rāhu became my enemy;*

8 *And I am the one who must suffer; no one helps me in my difficulty;*

9 *The gods look on quietly and see me being devoured. I will destroy the worlds! I promise this!*

10 Having made up his mind, he travelled to the western mountains, from where he began to scatter his rays for the worlds' destruction.

11 The ṛṣis rushed to the gods and said: "In the middle of the night today rose a massive conflagration to destroy the worlds."

12 The gods, with the ṛṣis, approached Brahmā Pitāmaha and said: "Who is responsible for this unbearable heat?

13 The Sun has not risen, yet it seems the worlds are being consumed. What will happen when he rises?"

14 Brahmā replied, "The Sun will rise to destroy the worlds. When he is fully risen, everything will turn to ashes.

15 I have, however, worked out a plan to prevent the destruction of the worlds.

16 Aruṇa, the wise son of Kaśyapa, has a giant body. He will station himself in front of the Sun, as his charioteer,

17 Draining away his energy. So will the worlds be saved, and the gods and the ṛṣis."

18 Aruna, ordered by Brahmā (continued Sauti) did as he was told. And the Sun rose, and was veiled by Aruṇa.

19 That is the story of the Sun's anger, and how Aruṇa was appointed charioteer of the Sun. Now I will answer the other question you put me a little while ago.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 The powerful bird, able to travel everywhere at will, flew to his mother on the other side of the great ocean

2 Where Vinatā lived, after she lost her wager, passing her days miserably as a slave.

3 One day Kadrū summoned Vinatā. Vinatā prostrated herself before Kadrū, who said, in the presence of Garuḍa, "Gentle Vinatā, in the depths of the ocean, in the secret part, is the beautiful and enchanting land of the nāgas. Take me there."

4 The mother of the lovely-plumaged bird picked up the mother of the snakes. Garuḍa, on his mother's instructions, carried the snakes on his back,

5 And sped upwards towards the sun. Scorched by the sun-rays, the snakes fainted.

6 Seeing her sons' plight, Kadrū prayed to Indra:

"Lord of the gods,
I bow to you!
Slayer of Bala, Indra,
I bow to you!

7 Slayer of Namuci,
I bow to you!
Thousand-eyed god,
Consort of Śacī,
Send down your showers
And save my sons
From the heat of the Sun!

8 Indra, Puraṁdara, Scorcher-of-cities,
Lord of the gods,
Protector,
Torrential rain-giver!

9 You are the wind-god Vāyu,
You are Agni, you are the clouds,
You the cloud-propeller,
You the dark cloud on the day of ultimate doom,
You the lightning!

10 You are the roaring clouds,
You the marvellous thunder,
You the Creator and Destroyer,
You the unconquered!

11 You are the light of all creatures,
You are Āditya, you Vibhāvasu,
You the Knowledge Supreme!
O Wonder of wonders!
King!
Lord of the gods!

12 You are Viṣṇu,
You have a thousand eyes!
You are divine,
You are the goal,
You are amṛta,
You the much-sought soma.

13 You are the instant movement,
The lunar day,
The bright fortrnight,
You the *lava*, you the *kṣaṇa*,
You the other divisions of time,
The year, the seasons,
Months, nights, and days.

14 You are the lovely earth
    rich in mountains and forests,
You are the shining sky
    adazzle with sun!
You the high-waved ocean,
    with timis, makaras, and other fishes.

15 Renowned Indra!
Worshipped by the wise
And by meditating ṛṣis!
You who drink the soma and ghee
Offered with vaṣaṭs
At the sacrificial rituals!

16 Indra, worshipped by Brahmins
Who seek the fruits of goodness!
O God of matchless strength,
Sung in the Vedas!
No wonder the Brahmins
Before the commencement of rituals
Study each branch of the Vedas
With special care."

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 Propitiated thus by Kadrū (continued Santi), the god who rides the best of horses filled the sky with dark-blue clouds.

2 He ordered the clouds, "Send down your beneficent, life-giving waters!" And they, radiant with lightning, poured heavy rain.

3 So dark were the clouds, incessantly pouring rain, so full of roaring and wonder, it seemed as if the end of the yuga had come. The myriads of waves,

4 Produced by the torrential downpour, the constantly-roaring clouds, the flashes of lightning, the violence of the wind – such chaos everywhere! – as if the sky was dancing in madness.

5 Then came darkness.
Darkness in the sky.
Sunlight and moonlight
Blotted by the ceaseless rain.
And the nāgas rejoiced
At the downpour of Indra.

6 The earth was filled with water,
cool, lucid,
which reached the depths
of the underworld.

7 Nothing but masses of heaving waves
everywhere,
when the snakes with their mother
arrived at the island called
Ramaṇīyakā.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 The nāgas were happy getting drenched in the heavy rain. Borne on the back of the lovely-plumaged bird, they soon arrived at the island.

2 This island was intended by the Creator of the universe to be the abode of makaras. On this island they had their first glimpse of the anti-god Lavaṇa.

3 Arriving with Garuḍa, they saw:
Fragrant forests
Washed by waves,
Echoing with birdsong.

4 Lovely fruit trees
And flowering plants,
Enchanting places,
Lotus-filled ponds.

5 Freshwater lakes
Scented with
Incense-breathing breezes.

6 Sandalwood trees
High on Malaya hill,
Shaking in the wind,
Raining down flowers.

7 And other trees too
Scattering their blossoms
As if welcoming the nāgas
With fragrant rain.

8 Beautiful forests
Filled with honeydrunk bees
And dear to the gandharvas,
Ravishing to the sight.

9 Enchanting, lovely, soothing, holy:
Echoing with birdsong, the forest
Captivated the sons of Kadrū.

10 No sooner had they arrived than they began to enjoy themselves, and ordered Garuḍa, the powerful king of birds:

11 "Take us, O bird, to another island of pure waters. Lovely must be the lands you have seen while coursing in the sky."

12 Garuḍa thought over this, and then asked his mother: "Why, mother, am I expected to obey these snakes?"

13 "Best among birds," answered Vinata, "ill luck has made me the slave of my husband's second wife. The snakes tricked me, I lost a bet – as a result of which I became her slave."

14 After his mother had explained this to him, the sky-ranging bird sorrowfully said to the snakes:

15 "Tell me, snakes, what should I do to free myself and my mother from slavery? What shall I bring? What knowledge gain? What great feat perform?"

16 The snakes replied: "Bring us the amṛta, by force, if necessary. This, O bird, will make you free."

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Garuḍa heard this (continued Sauti) and said to his mother, "I will get the amṛta. But now I am hungry. Where can I eat?"

2 "The Niṣadas live in the inaccessible middle of the ocean," she replied. "Eat thousands of Niṣadas–and bring the amṛta.

3 Never, however, think of killing a Brahmin. A Brahmin must never be killed. He is like fire.

4 Angered, he can be poison, fire, sun, a sharp tool.
He is the chief of all creatures,
Respected by the virtuous for this and other reasons.

5 He is not to be killed, my child, even in anger.
On no account is a quarrel with Brahmins
excusable.

6 Neither fire nor sun, O pure one, consumes
So much as a strict-vowed Brahmin stirred
to wrath.

7 There are ways of knowing a Brahmin:
He is the first-born of creatures,
The best of the four castes,
The father, the master, the teacher."

8 "What does he look like, a Brahmin?" asked Garuḍa. "How does he behave? What is his power? Does he glow like fire, or is he quiet and serene?

9 Tell me, mother, for I ask you this: What are the signs by which I can tell a Brahmin?"

10 "My son," replied Vinatā,
"The Brahmin will stick in your throat
like a fish-hook,
The Brahmin will burn your liver
like flaming charcoal.

16/ He received his mother's blessings (continued Sauti), stretched his wings & rose to the skies. His great strength soon brought him, hungry, like Yama himself, to the Niṣadas.

17/ He raised a huge dust storm that blotted out the sky. He sucked up water from the ocean, & shook the trees on nearby mountains. He was determined to kill the Niṣadas.

18/ The king of birds opened his massive beak wide on the main pathway of the Niṣadas; & the terrified Niṣadas rushed in fear into the beak of the great serpent-eater.

19/ Like fear-stricken birds
scattering in swarms in the sky
when storms shake forests,
So the dust-blinded Niṣadas
fled into the wide-open beak
of the terrible snake-eater.

20/ Till the hungry bird, great foe-subduer, endowed with tremendous strength, swift of wing & sure of purpose, closed his giant beak, devouring thousands of fisherfolk known as the Niṣadas.

[P. Lal's calligraphy, *The Mahābhārata,* Volume 7 June 1969]

11 You must not kill a Brahmin, even in anger." Because she loved her son, she added:

12 "You can tell a good Brahmin as one whom your stomach won't digest." And because she loved him deeply, she repeated her words.

13 She was aware of the invincible prowess of her son; yet the sorrowful and gentle Vinatā, whom the nāgas had deceived, blessed him.

14 "May the wind-god bless your wings,
my son,
May the moon-god and sun-god
bless your back.
May the fire-god bless your head,
my son,
May the Vasus bless
all parts of your body.

15 I will wait here till you return, performing rituals and praying for your success. Go, my son – may your mission be fruitful."

16 He received his mother's blessings (continued Sauti), stretched his wings and rose to the skies. His great strength soon brought him, hungry, like Yama himself, to the Niṣadas.

17 He raised a huge dust storm that blotted out the sky. He sucked up water from the ocean, and shook the trees on nearby mountains. He was determined to kill the Niṣadas.

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of the terrible snake-eater.

20 Till the hungry bird, great foe-subduer, endowed with tremendous strength, swift of wing and sure of purpose, closed his giant beak, devouring thousands of fisher folk known as the Niṣadas.

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Sauti continued: A Brahmin and his wife entered his throat. As soon as he felt the burning sensation, the great bird said:

2 "Best of Brahmins, come out! I open my mouth for you. I will not kill a Brahmin, even a thoroughly evil one."

3 The Brahmin replied to Garuḍa: "My wife, who is a Niṣada, must also come out with me."

4 "Come out, both of you!" shouted the bird. "Save yourselves before it's too late, before the heat of my bowels digests you."

5 The Brahmin and his Niṣada wife emerged; praising Garuda, they went back to their land.

6 Hardly had they left than the king of birds, swift as thought, spread his wings and rose to the sky.

7 He saw his father, who welcomed him. Garuḍa of incomparable strength reciprocated courteously. The ṛṣi Kaśyapa said:

8 "How are you, my son? Do you eat well every day? Is there food enough for you in the world of men?"

9 "My mother is well," replied Garuḍa. "My brother and I are well. But I do not get enough food, so I am not happy.

10 The snakes have ordered me here to get amṛta for them. Amṛta is not easy to get. But get it I will – and today; for I must free my mother from slavery.

11 My mother instructed me to eat the Niṣadas. I have devoured thousands, and I am still hungry.

12 Show me, noble father, some way to get more food, eating which I will get strength to bring the amṛta – enough to fill my hunger and slake my thirst."

13 Kasyapa replied: "The lake you see in front of you is sacred. It is famed even in heaven. In it an elephant, head downwards, drags endlessly his elder brother, a tortoise.

14 Let me give you the story of their hostility in a previous birth. I will give it in detail. It is a true story – proof of which is their presence here.

15 A very long time ago, there lived a maharṣi called Vibhāvasu, notorious for his irascibility. He had a younger brother, Supratīka, who was also a great ṛṣi.

16 He was not agreeable to holding his patrimony jointly with his brother. In fact, Supratīka was always insisting on dividing the wealth.

17 Finally Vibhāvasu said to Supratīka: 'Blinded by greed, many want to divide the family wealth; but this is unwise.

18 For, as soon as division takes place, they quarrel, blinded by wealth. Enemies posing as friends come between them,

19 Exploiting ignorance and selfishness to set brother against brother. Exposing each other's faults only confirms the bitterness, till the break-up point is reached,

20 And total ruin overtakes the separated brothers. Wise men can never approve of division between brothers,

21 For, once division takes place, mutual distrust destroys regard for scriptures and gurus. Because you, Supratīka, disregarding my advice, insist on division of patrimony,

22 You will be born an elephant.' And Supratīka, thus cursed, cursed Vibhāvasu back:

23 'You will be born a tortoise moving in the midst of waters.' Because of these mutual curses, Supratīkā and Vibhāvasu,

24 Fools both, and blinded by wealth, now live as elephant and tortoise. Their mutual wrath turned them both into animals.

25 They constantly fight. Proud of their physical strength and the enormous weight of their bodies, they continue the old quarrel afresh.

26 Look, the handsome elephant is emerging from the lake. Hearing him trumpeting, the tortoise also rises,

27 Thrashing the lake's waters. The elephant sees him, coils his trunk, and plunges into the waters.

28 With his tusks, with the front of his trunk, with his tail and feet, the huge elephant splashes the fish-filled water violently.

29 The huge tortoise, head jutting out, advances. The elephant is six yojanas tall, and twice as many yojanas in circumference.

30 The tortoise is three yojanas in height and ten yojanas in circumference. Go, devour them both, as they fight viciously, bent on killing each other;

31 And complete your mission. Eat the hill-high, cloud-massive elephant – and get the amṛta."

32 Saying this (continued Sauti), Kaśyapa blessed Garuḍa with these words:

33 "May you be blessed
In your fight against the gods,
Oviparous one!
Water-pots filled to the brim,

34 Brahmins and cattle,
And all auspicious things –
May they bless you, my son!
In your fight against the gods,

35 O bird of great power,
May all the Vedas – Ṛkg,
Sāma and Yajur – bless you!
May the sacred ghee
be on your side!
May the mysteries
give you strength!"

36 Garuda, blessed, went to the lake. Birds of all species skimmed on the surface of the clear, sparkling water.

37 He recalled the words of his father, and swooped on the elephant and tortoise, seizing one in each strong talon.

38 He soared high up into the sky. He flew to a sacred spot called Alamba, clustered with divine trees.

39 Struck by the commotion of his wings, the trees trembled, afraid their golden boughs would crack and fall.

40 When he saw the wish-fulfilling trees shaking in fear, the sky-ranging bird went to other trees, all breathtakingly beautiful,

41 Tall, stately trees
With gold and silver fruits
And gem-studded branches
Washed by the waters of the sea;

42 Each saying to the sky-ranging bird, who was flying swift as thought,

43 "Sit on this big branch of mine, a hundred yojanas long, and eat the elephant and tortoise."

44 The king of birds, hill-huge and mind-swift, perched on a thousand-nested branch; the tree trembled; the leafy branch shook, snapped, broke, fell.

SECTION THIRTY

1 It snapped and fell the instant powerful Garuḍa's weight was on it. Before it hit the ground, Garuḍa caught it.

2 He gazed in wonder at the giant bough and at the cluster of Vālakhilya ṛṣis hanging head downwards from it.

3 Seeing the noble ṛṣis suspended, he thought: *These are the most austere of ṛṣis. I cannot let them come to harm.*

4 *Yet, if the branch falls, they are sure to get killed.* He clutched the elephant and tortoise firmly in his talons,

5 And with the bough in his beak, fearing for the ṛṣis and eager to protect them, he flew high in the sky.

6 The ṛṣis, marvelling at this feat beyond even the power of the gods, gave the great bird a name.

7 They said:

"Because you soar in the skies
With a heavy burden,
Snake-devouring king of birds,
You will be Garuḍa,
The Burden-Bearing Bird."

8 Mountains vibrated below his wings as Garuḍa soared leisurely in the sky. He saw underneath him various lands,

9 But could not think of where to safely deposit the Vālakhilyas. At last he went to the fragrant mountain Gadhamādana,

10 Where his father Kaśyapa was practising strict tapasyā. Kaśyapa saw the divinely-endowed, sky-straddling bird,

11 Lustrous, strong, virile, wind-swift and mind-swift, hill-huge, as quick-striking as a Brahmin's curse,

12 Unimaginable, indescribable, puissant and terrifying, as splendid as Agni himself,

13 Mountain-smiting, ocean-swallowing, incapable of being defeated even by gods and anti-gods.

14 Endowed with power to destroy the three worlds, and as fierce as Yama himself, Kaśyapa saw him approach and guessed his mind and said:

15 "Do not be reckless, my son, or you will regret it. The Vālakhilyas absorb the rays of the sun and thus sustain themselves. If angered, they can pulverise you."

16 For the sake of his son (continued Sauti), Kaśyapa propitiated the ascetic, auspicious, unblemished Valakhilyas.

17 Kaśyapa said:
"Maharṣis!
Garuḍa means the good of the world!
His motives are noble.
Permit him his great deed."

18 So the great ascetics, requested by Kaśyapa, forsook the bough and departed for Himavant to practise their strict tapasyā.

19 After they had left, Vinatā's son, his voice choked by the bough in his beak, asked his father Kaśyapa:

20 "Shining father,
Where will I throw this great tree-arm?
Shining father,
Name me a place uninhabited by man."

21 Kaśyapa named him a caved and valleyed mountain region of eternal snows where no man lived, and inaccessible even to human thought.

22 The giant bird, carrying the bough, elephant and tortoise, sped swiftly to the broad-waisted mountain.

23 A rope of a hundred cow-hides would not be able to encircle the giant bough which the huge bird transported.

24 In a flash the king of birds Garuḍa covered the distance of 100,000 yojanas,

25 And, arriving in the region indicated by his father, he dropped the massive bough. It fell with a loud crash.

26 The king of mountains shook under the stormy vibrations of Garuḍa's wings. Its trees rained flowers.

27 The mountain cliffs, glittering as if with gems and gold, shook loose and rolled down on all sides.

28 The falling bough levelled many trees whose dark-green branches, studded with golden flowers, looked like lightning-charged clouds.

29 They fell on the ground,
these gold-bright trees,
They were coloured with the gold
of mountain minerals,
They looked like the long rays
of the flaming sun.

30 The king of birds perched on the summit, and feasted on the elephant and tortoise.

31 And so Kaśyapa's son Tārkṣya-Garuḍa devoured the elephant and the tortoise, and rose on his wings to the mountain skies.

32 Inauspicious omens appeared before the gods, foreboding fear. Indra's thunderbolt blazed up in fright.

33 Incandescent, smoky meteors fell from the sky in the day. The weapons of the Vasus,

34 Rudras, Ādityas, Sādhyas and other classes of gods battled with each other.

35 Things happened that never happened before – not even during the battle of the gods and anti-gods; thunder-voiced winds blew; thousands of meteors fell;

36 The cloudless sky roared;
The god of gods dripped blood;

37 The garlands on the neck of the gods
Faded into lustrelessness;
Masses of clouds vomited bloody rain;

38 Wind-blown dust dimmed the gods' crowns.
Indra of a hundred sacrifices, and other gods,
Bewildered and afraid, asked Bṛhaspati:

39 "Shining one,
Why these omens of disaster?
We see no enemy
With whom we must fight."

40 Bṛhaspati replied:
"Chief of the gods, Indra-Śatakratu,
God of a hundred sacrifices,
It is your carelessness and fault,
And the tapasyā of the Vālakhilyas,

41 That have made the son of Kaśyapa,
Assumer of any form he wills,
Decide to take away the amṛta.

42 He is the strongest of the strong,
This bird. Nothing is beyond him.
The impossible he makes possible.
He can even take away the amṛta."

43 Indra heard these words (continued Sauti) and said to those who guarded the amṛta, "An enormously powerful bird has determined to take away our amṛta.

44 I warn you in advance: stop him. I am given to understand by Bṛhaspati that his strength is unparalleled."

45 The astonished gods took all precautions. They formed a ring round the amrta, and mighty Indra, thunderbolt in hand, stood alongside them.

46 The breastplates of the gods were of gold, embossed with precious stones, beautiful to behold.

47 Their armour was of tough, polished leather; they were armed with sharp, fierce-shaped weapons,

48 Which emitted fire as well as smoke. In addition, many of the excellent gods wielded

49 Cakras, iron clubs, spikes, spears, tridents, battle-axes and many sharp-pointed missiles, glittering swords and maces suiting their respective bodies.

50 Armed with these dazzling weapons, and adorned with celestial ornaments, the gods waited, their fears allayed.

51 Unmatched in strength, vigour and radiance, capable of disintegrating the cities of the anti-gods, displaying shapes as refulgent as blazing fires, resolved to guard the amṛta, the gods waited.

52 They stood there, the gods,
Hundreds of thousands of maces
Fitted with iron spokes
    Shone
      On the battlefield!
The battlefield shone
    Like a second sky
      Raidant with sunlight.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 Śaunaka asked: "Sūta's son, what was Indra's fault? Or was it his carelessness? How did Garuḍa come to be born as a result of the penances of the Vālakhilyas?

2 Why did Kaśyapa, a Brahmin, have the king of birds for his son? What made his son invincible and indestructible?

3 How was the bird able to travel anywhere at will and summon any amount of strength at will? If these questions are answered in the Purāṇas, I would like to know about them."

4 Sauti replied: The Purāṇas supply all the answers.
Listen to me, Brahmin.
I will give you the story in brief.

5 Prajāpati Kaśyapa, desiring children, decided to perform a sacrifice for the purpose. The ṛṣis, gods and gandharvas argeed to assist him.

6 So Kaśyapa instructed Indra, the Vālakhilya ṛṣis, and other gods to fetch fuel for the sacred fire.

7 Mighty Indra summoned up his strength to carry a mountain-size load with supreme ease.

8 On the way he spotted some thumb-sized ṛṣis carrying a single stalk of *palāśa*.

9 Poor ṛṣis, starved to shadow-thinness; great was their distress when they fell in a dent in the path made by a cow.

10 Proud Indra crossed over their heads, first showing surprise and then insulting them by laughing at them.

11 Shame and anger filled them. They resolved to take revenge on Indra.

12 Listen to what happened, O Śaunaka. These excellent ṛṣis, to the accompaniment of loudly chanted mantras, poured ghee in the sacred fire, and predicted:

13 "There will be another Indra! –
Travelling everywhere at will,
Summoning all strength at will,
Striking fear in the present Indra.

14 May our tapasyā bear fruit!
May a second Indra be born, fierce,
Terribly so, and swift as thought."

15 Indra of a hundred sacrifices, alarmed, sought the help of the ascetic, strictly disciplined Kaśyapa.

16 Prajāpati Kaśyapa heard everything from Indra, hurried to the Vālakhilyas, and asked if their sacrifice had been successful.

17 The truth-speaking ṛṣis replied, "You have well described it." Prajāpati Kaśyapa spoke gently to them:

18 "Brahmā appointed Indra lord of the three worlds. Yet you, O ṛṣis, are bent on creating a second Indra.

19 Excellent ones, do not do this: do not make false the word of Brahmā. And yet I do not wish your vowed purpose to become futile.

20 Instead of a lord of men, let the second be a puissant lord of birds. Be gracious to Indra, who is your suppliant."

21 The Vālakhilya ṛṣis listened to him; they offered pūjā-respect to the noble Prajāpati and said:

22 "All that we wanted, O Prajāpati, was to create another Indra. It was also intended to create a son for you.

23 Our effort has born fruit. The rest is up to you. Do what you think is right."

24 Around this time (continued Sauti), Vinatā, the good and amiable daughter of Dakṣa, desiring to become a mother,

25 Took her ceremonial bath after the period of her impurity, and went to her lord. Kaśyapa said to her:

26 "Lady, my sacrifice
has been successful.
What you desire
will be yours:
Two sons will be born,
lords of the three worlds.

27 The tapasyā of the Vālakhilyas, and my own desire when I began the sacrifice, will bring you two fortune-favoured sons, respected by the three worlds."

28 The illustrious Kaśyapa added: "Bear my auspicious semen carefully.

29 For these two will be lords of the winged world. They will be great heroes, capable of changing shape at will, and they will be respected by the three worlds."

30 Kaśyapa, satisfied, said to Indra: "You will have two brothers of great strength and courage to help you.

31 They will do you no harm, Puraṁdara-Indra. You have no cause to fear. You will remain Indra, lord of all.

32 But see that the followers of Brahmā are not insulted by you. See that those, whose curses are like thunderbolts, are not again insulted by you."

33 Indra listened; his fears were removed; and he returned to heaven. And Vinatā rejoiced, for her desire had been granted.

34 Two sons were born to her, Aruṇa and Garuḍa, The deformed Aruṇa become the charioteer of the Sun, stationed in front of Bhāskara the Sun.

35 And Garuḍa became the king of birds. Listen, descendant of Bhṛgu, to some of his exploits.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 As the gods stood in battle array (continued Sauti), the king of birds Garuḍa suddenly swooped on them.

2 They saw him and his enormous size and they trembled in fear and began to strike at each other with their weapons.

3 Among those guarding the amṛta was Bhaumana-Viśvakarma, incomparably powerful and energetic, radiant with the effulgence of lightning.

4 In less than a moment's gruesome encounter he was ripped open by the talons, beak and wings of the king of birds.

5 The great sky-ranging bird darkened the worlds with dust-storms whipped up by his wings till the awed gods,

6 Overcome with swirling dust, fainted. The dust prevented the guards around the amṛta from seeing Garuḍa.

7 And so Garuḍa agitated the celestial regions, mangling the gods with beak and wing-inflicted wounds.

8 Then thousand-eyed Indra ordered Vāyu the wind-god: "Do your work, O Maruta! Scatter the dust!"

9 Powerful Vāyu scattered and dispelled the dust-storm. In the dissipating darkness, the gods attacked Garuḍa.

10 Attacked, he screamed, like the doomsday clouds – a scream that frightened all creatures.

11 He rose on his wings, the foe-slaying mighty king of birds, till he straddled

12 The heads of the gods who, urged by Indra, struck at him with twin-edged swords, spiked iron maces,

13 Pointed lances, glittering arrows, and sun-bright cakras. Attacked from all sides,

14 He fought on untiringly; and then he counter-attacked, the puissant son of Vinatā, blazing in the sky, till the force of his wings and breast routed the gods.

15 Beak-bitten and talon-torn, the gods bled profusely.

16 Defeated, the Sādhyas and the Gandharvas fled eastwards, and the Vasus and the Rudras fled to the south,

17 The Ādityas to the west and the Aśvins to the north. The gifted gods retreated fighting, casting backward glances on ther enemy.

18 Garuḍa battled with brave Aśvakranda, Reṇuka, bold Tapana, Krathana,

19 Uluka, Nimiṣeṇa, Praruja, Śvaṣana, and Praliha.

20 Mangling them with his beak, wings and talons, the son of Vinatā looked like angry Pināka-Śiva himself at the end of a yuga.

21 The powerful and virile gods, clawed by the bird, looked like black cloud masses dripping blood.

22 Wounding many of them near-fatally, Garuḍa rushed to where the amṛta was. He saw it ringed with fire.

23 Fanned by the winds
The flames of that fire
Licked the sky
Burning like the sun.

24 Garuda made himself
Ninety times ninety mouths!
He drank up river waters with
Ninety times ninety mouths!
He swooped down swiftly
On his giant wings,

25 He extinguished the flames
With the waters of the rivers.
Having done this, he
Changed to miniscule form
To enter the spot
Where the amṛta was kept.

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Burning brightly like the rays of the
Sun, he
Rushed in as a torrent rushes into
the sea.

2 He saw the amrta, and near it, he
Saw a razor-sharp wheel, revolving endlessly.

3 A blazing, sun-bright wheel!
A fearful spectre!
God-crafted to cut down stealers
of the nectar.

4 He stopped. He saw in it a
passage; roll-
ing up his body to pin-point, he
sped through the hole.

5 Inside, guardians of the amṛta,
two great frightening
snakes, with fire-fierce eyes and
tongues like lightning,

6 Dazzling-bright, of incredible
power, dire-
ly venomous, wrathful, spitting
fire.

7 They glared with unwinking, baleful eyes. The sight of either would instantly reduce the beholder to ashes.

8 The lovely-plumaged bird Suparṇa-Garuḍa scattered dust in their eyes, blinding them. Then he attacked.

9 He fell on their bodies, and ripped them into fragments. He stood before the amṛta.

10 Vinatā's mighty son picked up the amṛta and swiftly rose to the sky, smashing through the contraption in which it had been secreted.

11 He did not drink the amṛta but sped away effortlessly with it, darkening the sun.

12 On his way he glimpsed Viṣṇu in the sky. Viṣṇu was pleased with Garuḍa's self-denial.

13 The Undecaying One Viṣṇu said to the sky-ranging bird, "Ask a boon!" The bird replied, "Let me be above you!"

14 He added, "Make me immortal and free from disease, without drinking the amṛta."

15 Viṣṇu told the son of Vinatā, "Granted." Accepting the boons, Garuda said to Viṣṇu, "I will also grant you a boon." Viṣṇu asked the mighty weight-bearing bird to be his vehicle.

16 He asked Garuda to perch on the flag-staff of his chariot, saying, "In this way you will always be above me." The bird replied, "Agreed."

17 His swiftness mocking the wind, he sped away. Indra hurled his thunderbolt

18 At Garuḍa, the king of birds, flying away with the amṛta. Hit, Garuḍa at first showed anger, then laughed,

19 And spoke these sweet words to Indra:
"Indra!
I honour the ṛṣi Dadhīca
Out of whose bones
You fashioned your thunderbolt.

20 I honour the thunderbolt,
And I send you, Indra,
A feather of mine
Whose measurements you
Will never determine.

21 Your thunderbolt has not
Hurt me at all."
He shouted this, and
Threw down a feather.

22 The world's creatures saw the exquisite feather drift down, and they rejoiced, saying, 'Let this bird be known as Suparṇa, the lovely-plumaged one."

23 Thousand-eyed Indra was equally amazed and, thinking the bird to be a great deity, said:

24 "I will be friends with you,
O best among birds!
I will know the extent of your strength,
O Garuḍa!"

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 To which Garuḍa replied:
"And I will be friends with you,
Puraṁdara! Destroyer of cities,
I tell you this: I am mighty,
my strength is incredible.

2 The learned are not supposed to commend
Themselves – their strength or their virtues.

3 Since I am now friends with you
And you ask me,
I tell you this, for it is never right
Without reason to praise oneself.

4 The earth, her mountains, forests, oceans,
You too,
I can carry on a single feather of mine.
So listen to me, Indra!

5 All the worlds put together,
Untiringly
I can carry, all moving and
unmoving things –
Such is my strength!"

6 The great lord Indra, king of the pantheon, heaven's crown-wearer, the possessor of all wealth, world-benefactor, heard Garuḍa's words, and he said:

7 "What you say is true.
Nothing is beyond your power.
I offer you my friendship.

8 If you do not require the amṛta,
return it to me. Those to whom
you give it
will always be our enemies."

9 Garuḍa replied: "I have a reason for taking away the amṛta. I do not intend to give it to anyone to drink.

10 As soon as I place it on the ground, O thousand-eyed god, you may take it away with you. It is yours."

11 "Your words please me deeply," replied Indra. "Best among birds, take from me any boon that you wish."

12 Guruḍa recalled the sons of Kadrū and the slavery of his mother by fraud, and he said:

13 "Though there is nothing I cannot do, Indra, I will accept your boon. Grant that all snakes become my food."

14 "Granted," replied the destroyer of the Dānava anti-gods and went to Hari-Nārāyaṇa, the God of gods, the Lord of yogis, the Mahā-Ātman.

15 And Hari sanctioned the boon. Then the shining lord of the worlds said to Garuḍa,

16 "I will take away the amṛta as soon as you put it down," and bade him farewell. Suparṇa-Garuḍa hurried to his mother.

17 To his snake-brothers he said joyfully: "Here is the amṛta. I will place it on the blades of kuśa grass.

18 Lick it when your ablutions and religious rites are completed. I have done what you ordered me to do.

19 From this day, my mother is free. You promised it." "Agreed," replied the snakes,

20 And went to perform their ablutions. In the meanwhile Indra came and took the pot of amṛta back to heaven.

21 The snakes finished their ablutions, daily meditations and other customary ceremonies, and joyfully prepared to lick the amṛta.

22 They found nothing on the kuśa grass where the amṛta was supposed to have been placed. Guessing a counter-deception,

23 They began to lick the blades of kuśa grass. Instantly, their tongues were cut in two.

24 Because the amṛta was placed on it, kuśa grass is held sacred; because the snakes licked the grass, they have forked tongues. This is the story of how Garuḍa brought the amṛta to the snakes.

25 The lovely-plumaged bird and his mother passed their days happily. Vinatā's son delighted his mother by eating the snakes, earning the reverence of all birds, and performing many mighty feats.

26 He who listens to this story,
He who reads it to the learned and twice-born,
Brahmin, Kṣatriya or Vaiśya,
Is sure to go to heaven.
Such is the merit of its recitation.

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 Śaunaka said, "Sauti, you have told us why the snakes were cursed by their mother; why Vinatā cursed her sons.

2 You have told us of the granting of boons to Kadrū and Vinatā by their husband. You have given us the names of the two sons of Vinatā.

3 But you have not given us the names of the snake-sons of Kadrū. We are eager to know the important among them."

4 Revered one (replied Sauti), I think it will bore you, the names of all the snakes. But let me give you just the chief ones. Listen to them:

5 Airāvata, Takṣaka, Karkoṭara, Dhanañjaya, Kāliya, Maṇi, Apūraṇa;

6 Piñjaraka, Elāpatra, Vāmana, Nīla, Anila, Kalmāṣa, Śabala;

7 Āryaka, Ugraka, Śalapotaka, Sumanākhya, Dadhimukha, Vimalapiṇḍaka;

8 Āpta, Kaṭonaka, Śaṅkha, Vāliśikha, Niṣṭūnaka, Hemaguha, Nahuṣa, Piṅgala;

9 Vāhyakarṇa, Hastipada, Mudgarpiṇdaka, Kambala, Aśvatara, Kāliyaka;

10 Vṛtta, Saṁvartaka, the two Padmas, Saṅkhamukha, Kūṣmāṇdaka;

11 Kṣemaka, Piṇḍāraka, Karavīra, Puṣpadaṁṣṭra, Bilvaka, Bilvapaṇḍura;

12 Mūṣakada, Saṅkhaśiras, Pūrṇabhadra, Haridraka, Aparājita, Jyotika, Śrīvaha;

13 Kauravya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Śaṅkhapiṇḍa, Virajā, Subaha, Salipiṇḍa;

14 Hastipinḍa, Piṭharaka, Sumukha, Kauṇapāśana, Kuṭhara, Kuñjara, Prabhākara;

15 Kumuda, Kumudākṣa, Tittiri, Halika, Kardama, Bahumūlaka, Karkara, Akarkara, Kuṇdodara, Mahodara.

16 O best among the twice-born, these are the names of the chief snakes. I do not want to be tedious, so I omit the rest.

17 As for the sons and grandsons of these snakes, they are so many, O Dvijottama, finest of the twice-born, that I will not list them for you.

18 O you whose wealth is tapasyā! It is impossible to count all the snakes in this world. There are so many thousands of millions of them everywhere.

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 Śaunaka said, "You told us once of many vastly powerful and invincible snakes. What did they do?"

2 Sauti replied: Illustrious Śeṣa left his mother Kadrū and busied himself with the strictest tapasyā, involving feeding on air and rigid vows.

3 He performed these penances in the Puṣkara forest, Gandhamādana, Gokarṇa, Badari, and the Himālayan foothills.

4 In these sacred places, he observed rigid vows, subdued his passions, and focussed his mental energies on yoga.

5 Brahmā Pitāmaha, divine grandfather of all creatures, saw him, with matted locks, wearing rags, his skin and sinews all shrivelled with severe self-mortification.

6 Brahmā said to the penance-perfect ṛṣi, "Śeṣa, what are you doing? Attend to the welfare of the worlds.

7 Defectless one, your penance gives pain to the creatures of the worlds. What do you wish, O Śeṣa?"

8 Śeṣa replied, "My brothers have wicked hearts. I do not wish to stay with them. Grant this, O Brahmā.

9 They are envious of each other – as enemies are. I refuse even to see them. I engage myself in tapasyā.

10 Did they ever show any kindness to Vinatā, or to her son, the bird of the air, our brother?

11 They were jealous of him. And it is true that he is stronger than all of us, because of the special boon he received from our father, the famous and noble Kaśyapa.

12 So I choose tapasyā. I will cast off this body, if necessary, but I will not live with them even in another life."

13 Brahmā told Śeṣa, "I know perfectly well what type your brothers are.

14 Their offence against their mother puts them in great danger. But I have thought of a way out.

15 Do not grieve for them. Whatever you desire, O Śeṣa, ask from me.

16 For I am pleased with you and I will grant you a boon today. How excellent, O best of snakes, that your heart is set on dharma! May it grow from dharma to more dharma!"

17 "Brahmā Pitāmaha, lord of all," said Śesa, "I ask only this boon: May my heart always be happy in dharma, may my mind persevere in tapasyā."

18 Brahmā said, "You have pleased me with your self-denial and love of goodness. I command you to do this for the good of all creatures –

19 Unsteady is this world –
Towns, āśramas, oceans,
Mountains and forests:
Be to her a guide:
Hold her steady, Śeṣa,
Even as you are steady."

20 Śeṣa replied:
"Divine lord of creatures,
Lord of earth, lord of life,
Lord of the universe,
I will do as you say,
I will hold the world steady.
I ask you, Prajāpati,
To place her on my head."

21 Brahmā said: "Best among snakes, go under the earth. She will make a passage for you. You will do what I value most by steadying the earth."

22 The elder brother of the king of snakes Vāsuki (continued Sauti) burrowed through the earth till he emerged on the other side, holding fast the Earth-Devī adorned with her girdle of seas.

23 Brahmā said:

"You are Dharma, O Śeṣa!
You hold the world steady
With enormous body,
All things in her
Are steady in you –
Only I and Indra
Can do what you do."

24 Which explains how Śeṣa-Nāga, the vastly powerful lord Ananta, living below the ground, holds the world steady by the command of Brahmā.

25 After this, Brahmā Pitāmaha, lord of mortals, arranged to have Garuḍa, the son of Vinatā, assist Śeṣa-Nāga.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Vāsuki, best among snakes, heard the curse of his mother and immediately thought of ways to counteract it.

2 First he had a discussion with his snake-brothers, Airāvata and all the others who followed dharma.

3 "Defectless ones," said Vāsuki, "you know there is a curse on us. We must find a way of nullifying it.

4 All curses have remedies, but there is no escape from the curse of a mother.

5 I am afraid, because this curse was pronounced before Brahmā the Infinite, the True and the Immutable.

6 Perhaps our doom is near,
Or why did not Brahmā
Stop our mother from speaking
The curse out at all?

7 There is no time to waste.
Let us decide today
How to save the snakes.

8 Wise and discerning ones,
Let us meet and resolve
On the means of deliverance,

9 Like the gods who in the past
Resolved to save Agni who was
Hiding in a cave.
Janamejaya's sacrifice
must not take place.
The snake-race must not
be destroyed.
We must save ourselves."

10 The children of Kadrū (continued Sauti) met in council and exchanged ideas.

11 One group among them said: “Let’s go disguised as Brahmin ṛṣiṣ and dissuade Janamejaya from his sacrifice.”

12 Another group, the clever ones, said, “Let’s become his special advisers.

13 He is bound to ask our opinion in all important affairs, and we will see to it that he gets no encouragement to perform the sacrifice.

14 All we do is say wisely, when he asks our advice, ‘Don’t hold the sacrifice.’

15 We could trot out any number of terrible evils, in this world and the next, sure to befall him if he allows the sacrifice to take place.

16 Or one among us could slip in and bite the king’s well-wishers, specially the person who, most familiar

17 With the rites of the snake-sacrifice, is likely to be appointed chief priest at the sacrifice. Their deaths will put an end to the proceedings

18 We could also bite those we think are most likely to be appointed ṛtviks. That would be a perfect job!”

19 A third group, the kind and dharmātmā ones, said: “What you have just suggested is foolish. It does no one credit to kill Brahmins.

20 That work succeeds
behind which is dharma.
The use of adharma
defeats its own ends.”

21 Another group said, "We could arrange to extinguish the sacred fire by turning ourselves into clouds charged with lightning and sending down rain."

22 Some snakes said, "Let us at night steal the vessel of soma-rasa, without which no sacrifice can be performed.

23 Or we could invade the place of sacrifice in hundreds and thousands and spread terror by biting all present.

24 Perhaps we could go and defile the holy food with urine and dung.

25 Still others said, "Let's go disguised as the king's ṛtviks and put an end to the sacrifice by demanding our dakṣiṇā even before the sacrifice begins.

26 He cannot refuse us, and we know what we want." Others said, "When the king comes to sport in our waters,

27 We'll kidnap and imprison him, and the sacrifice will have to be cancelled." Others, self-appointedly wise, said:

28 "Bite His Majesty and have done with it. His death is the root solution.

29 Let this be the final result of our consultation, O snake who hears with the eyes. Do now what you think is best."

30 All of them gazed intently at the king of snakes, Vāsuki. thought for a while, and then said:

31 "Your last suggestion does not appeal to me, O snakes. Indeed, no suggestion does.

32 And I personally have no plan to ensure your welfare. The grace of our noble father Kaśyapa alone can help us.

33 Frankly, I am at a loss to know which of your suggestions to adopt.

34 My mind is full of misgiving – for praise or blame will fall entirely on me regardless of what I decide to do."

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 One among them, Elāpatra, listened carefully to the words of the snakes and of Vāsuki, and spoke up:

2 "This is not the kind of sacrifice that can be prevented, and the king who so terrifies us, Janamejaya of the Pāṇḍava race, is not the kind of king who gives in easily.

3 There is no refuge
When fate dictates;
When fate dictates,
Fate alone heals.

4 O best among snakes,
Our fear is fate.
Let fate be our refuge.
Listen to my words.

5 While that curse was being uttered, I cowered in my mother's lap, trembling. O best among snakes, lord,

6 O snakes of shining splendour, I heard the worried gods address Brahmā:

7 'O Brahmā Pitāmaha, O God of gods, Kadrū, after giving birth to such dear children, cursed them in your presence,

8 And all you said was: *So be it*. Tell us, why did you not stop her?'

9 'They are many, the snakes,'
Replied Brahmā, 'they are cruel,
Fearful of form, and poisonous.
Wishing the good of creatures,
I did not stop Kadrū.

10 The always-biting snakes,
Snakes who bite for little reason,
Snakes who are evil-minded,
Are doomed. Only those who follow dharma
Will survive.

11 Listen, and I will tell you
How the virtuous will escape
At the time of dreadful doom.

12 In the Yāyāvara race
Will be born Jaratkāru
A noble and disciplined ṛṣi.

13 And a great ṛṣi Āstīka
Will be son to Jaratkāru.
He will stop the snake-sacrifice.
The dharma-following snakes will escape.'

14 The gods asked, 'By whom will the greatest of ṛṣis, deeply dedicated and ascetic Jaratkāru, father this son?'

15 'By a wife of the same name,'
Replied Brahmā. 'This will be so.

16 The sister of Vāsuki, the snake-king,
Is Jaratkāru; born from her womb,
Āstīka will save the snakes.'

17 The gods said, 'So be it,' and Brahmā, lord of the gods, returned to heaven.

18 I see in front of me, O Vāsuki, your sister Jaratkāru. Rid us of this curse! Give her to Jaratkāru,

19 The strict-vowed ṛṣi, when he comes begging for a bride. For I have known the means of our deliverance."

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 O best among the twice-born (said Sauti), the snakes heard Elāpatra and exclaimed, "*Sādhu! Sādhu*! Excellent!"

2 From that day Vāsuki took a personal interest in bringing up his sister.

3 It was a little after this that the gods and anti-gods churned the abode of Varuṇa.

4 Tremendously powerful Vāsuki was used as the churning rope. Churning over, he went to Brahmā.

5 The gods said to Brahmā Pitāmaha: "Lord, Vāsuki is still agitated over the curse.

6 Embedded in his heart is the dart of his mother's curse. Pull it out, that he may achieve the welfare of his race.

7 He has been a great help to us and has always meant us well. O lord god, be kind to him and still his troubled mind."

8 "I have considered the matter carefully," Brahmā replied. "Let the snake-king do as Elāpatra advised him long ago.

9 The time of doom for the wicked has come. Only those who follow dharma shall escape.

10 Jaratkāru lives, engaged in strict austerities. Let Vāsuki at the right time give his sister to Jarakāru.

11 What Elāpatra said, O gods, about the deliverance of the snakes is true. There is no other way."

12 The curse-afflicted snake-king listened to Brahmā's words, and ordered the snakes,

13 Known to be conscientious in the discharge of their duties, to keep a vigil for Jarakāru. His words were:

14 "When the noble Jaratkāru comes this way in search of a bride, report to me immediately. Our future depends on it."

SECTION FORTY

1 Śaunaka asked: "Tell us, Sūta's son, why the noble ṛṣi whom you call Jaratkāru came to be known by that name.

2 It will please us if you could give us its etymology."

3 Sauti replied, "Well, 'jara' means 'waste' and 'kāru' means 'huge', the idea being that the huge body of this ṛṣi simply wasted away

4 In severe tapasyā. Because he emaciated his body thus, he was called Jaratkāru. Vāsuki's sister was called Jaratkā ru for the same reason."

5 Revered Śaunaka heard this, smiled, and said to Ugraśrava, "You are right.

6 I have heard all this before. And now: tell us how Āstīka was born."

7 Sauti said: Vāsuki, eager to give his sister to Jaratkāru, ordered the snakes accordingly.

8 Many years passed, but the strict-vowed ṛṣi remained deeply engaged in tapasyā and showed no sign of wanting to marry.

9 His sexual urge controlled, always studying and meditating, the mahātmā ṛṣi roamed without fear all over the world, never once thinking of taking a wife.

10 Now, there was a king named Parīkṣit, born in the Kaurava dynasty,

11 Who, like his grandfather, was a mighty warrior, chief among bowmen on the battlefield, and addicted to hunting.

12 Like a lord of the world he roamed everywhere, hunting deer, wild boar, hyena and buffalo, and other animals.

13 One day, after shooting a deer with an arrow, he slung his bow on his back and entered the deep forest,

14 Searching for the beast everywhere, as Rudra-Śiva in heaven once searched for the sacred deer he had shot.

15 Never before had a deer pierced by Parīkṣit succeeded in escaping. This one, however, though wounded, swiftly disappeared – an ill omen that Parīkṣit's time to depart from earthly life had come.

16 Though the wounded deer could not be spotted, the king kept pursuing it till he was deep inside the forest.

17 Tired and thirsty, he came upon a sage sitting inside a cowshed, drinking the froth

18 That bubbled out of the mouths of calves sucking milk from their mothers' dugs. Parīkṣit rushed in,

19 And asked the strict-vowed ṛṣi, "O Brahmin, I am king Parīkṣit, son of Abhimanyu;

20 I am chasing a deer I wounded; did it pass this way?" The ṛṣi, true to his vow of silence, did not answer.

21 The furious king picked up a dead snake with the end of his bow and placed it round the ṛṣi's neck. The ṛṣi did not protest.

22 He did not say one word, good or bad. Chastened and sorry, the king returned to his capital,

23 And the ṛṣi remained where he was. The forgiving ṛṣi, knowing that Parīkṣit, the best of kings,

24 Had behaved as befitted a king, did not curse him. Neither had the king, the best of the Bharata race, any idea of the great holiness

25 Of the ṛṣi. That was the reason he insulted the sage. This ṛṣi had a son, an energetic and deeply ascetic young man.

26 Named Śṛṅgi, notorious for his temper, and a difficult person to appease. His devotion he reserved for the worship of his Brahmin preceptor; and he remained

27 Ensconced in his seat and dedicated to the welfare of all creatures. On instructions from his preceptor, he was returning home one day.

28 When his friend the weakling Kṛśa (so called because he practised excessive dharma) began teasing him about his father. Śṛṅgi, virulent like poison itself,

29 Blazed up in uncontrollable anger as he listened to what had happened to his father.

30 "Śṛṅgi," said Kṛśa, "don't be proud. You may be an excellent ascetic, but your father is wearing a carcass round his neck.

31 Don't mix any more with the sons of ṛṣis, who practise tapasyā, know truth and achieve success.

32 What's going to happen to all that fine manliness of yours, and all those high-and-mighty words, when you see your father wearing a snake's carcass?

33 But to tell you the truth, your father did nothing to deserve this, and I feel sorry for him, almost as if it had happened to me."

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 Spoken to in this way, and learning that his father was wearing a snake's carcass, Śṛṅgi was furious.

2 But he looked straight at Kṛśa and asked softly, "Why does my father wear this dead snake?"

3 And Kṛśa replied, "Because, dear friend, King Parīkṣit in the course of his hunting expedition thought fit to place a snake's carcass on the neck of your father."

4 "But what wrong did my father do the wicked king to deserve this?" asked Śṛṅgi. "Tell me this, Kṛśa, and I will show you what I can do."

5 Kṛśa said, "King Parīkṣit, the son of Abhimanyu, was chasing a swift deer that he had wounded.

6 The deer escaped in the forest, and the king while searching for him stumbled on your father,

7 Who at that time had taken a vow of silence. The king, tired, thirsty and hungry, repeatedly asked your father about the escaped deer,

8 To which, of course, your vow-silent father did not reply. Angered, the king lifted a dead snake with the end of his bow and looped it round your father's neck.

9 Your father is still there, in the same posture. The king has returned to his elephant-named capital Hastināpura."

10 When he heard of the dead snake on his father's neck (continued Sauti), the eyes of the ṛṣi's son reddened with anger like fire.

11 Burning with anger, the powerful ṛṣi Śṛṅgi touched water and pronounced this curse:

12 "That man who placed
A dead snake on the neck
Of my old and lean father –

13 That insulter of Brahmins,
That blot on the Kauravas, –
He will die!
Seven nights from now,

14 Spurred by my words,
Takṣaka the snake king
Will take him to the land
Of Yama, god of death!"

15 Angry curse over, he went to his father, and saw him sitting in the cowshed, the snake round his neck.

16 The sight of the snake revived his fierce anger.

17 Tears of humiliation in his eyes, he said: "Father, I learnt how you had been disgraced by that wretch,

18 King Parīkṣit, and in my anger I cursed him. That Kaurava scoundrel deserves my terrible curse! Seven days from today, Takṣaka, the king of snakes,

19 Will spirit him away to the fearful abode of Death." The father said to his furious son Śṛṅgi:

20 "Child, you have not pleased me. Holy men like us do not act the way you have done. We live in the king's dominions;

21 He gives us protection; it is right that we should overlook the faults of the ruler.

22 If you destroy Dharma, my son,
Dharma will destroy you.
If the king will not protect us,
great sorrows will be ours.

23 For we will not then be able to perform our religious rituals as we would like to. Because a noble-minded king protects us,

24 We flourish; and our welfare is shared by the king. For this reason, it is right that we overlook the faults of the ruler –

25 Specially a ruler like Parīkṣit who, like his great-grandfather, has always governed as a king should govern his subjects.

26 That disciplined monarch was hungry and thirsty, and he did not know I had taken a vow of silence.

27 A country without a strong ruler is an invitation to chaos. A strong ruler punishes law-breakers;

28 Fear of punishment is a step to peace, for people can go about their duties and perform their rites undisturbed.

29 Divine is such a ruler's kingdom. The king safeguards the yajña-sacrifices, and the sacrifices please the gods;

30 The gods send rain, and rain produces healing herbs; healing herbs ensure the welfare of mankind.

31 Manu has said: 'The worth of one ruler of the destinies of men is equal to ten Brahmins loaded with Vedic wisdom.'

32 Because hunger and thirst made him forget himself, and because he did not know that I was on a vow of silence, that disciplined king did what he did.

33 And you, my son, how wrong of you to have done this ill deed – you should have known he in no way deserves our curse."

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 Śṛṅgi replied, "Father, like it or dislike it, call it foolish, call it wrong, what I have said I have said.

2 And I'll tell you this, father: I mean every word of it. You know I do not lie, not even as a joke."

3 "I know, my son, that you are strong of will, and I know that you are truthful," said Śamīka. "You have never spoken a lie in your life, so your curse cannot fail.

4 But even a grown-up son can benefit from a father's advice which, coupled with his own good qualities, can bring high renown.

5 You are very young, and your need for advice is therefore greater. I know you are an ascetic, but it is well known that the wrath of some ascetics grows even as their ascetic powers develop.

6 Because you are my son, O best among disciplined men, and because you are very young and impulsive, I give you this advice.

7 Eat the fruits and roots of the forest, my son,
And live as an ascetic.
May you prosper!
But destroy your anger
Before your anger destroys you.

8 The virtues that holy men acquire
Anger quickly devours;
Virtues gone,
What hope has man?

9 Be serene; be patient; learn to forgive;
This will lead to success.
Goodness belongs to patient forgiveness,
In this world and the next.

10 Be self-controlled.
Learn to be patient and forgive.
Patient forgiveness will give you worlds
Beyond the reach even of Brahmā.

11 Because I have chosen peace as my ideal, my son, I will do what I can. I will send word to the king telling him:

12 'Your majesty, you have been cursed in anger by my son, who is just a child and still immature. He did this because he thought you slighted me'."

13 That noble, strict-vowed and kind-hearted ascetic (continued Sauti) sent a duly-instructed disciple to Parīkṣit.

14 Gauramukha was the disciple's name, a mild-mannered, disciplined young man; he was instructed first to enquire after the king's welfare, and then to state his real purpose.

15 Gauramukha went on his mission and gained entry in the palace by announcing his arrival through the gate-keeper.

16 The Brahmin Gauramukha was received with high honour. After he had briefly rested, he told the king, in the presence of all the ministers, the terrible words of Śamīka, exactly as he had been instructed.

17 "There lives in your kingdom, O king of kings," he began, "a ṛṣi named Śamīka.

18 He is a noble-ātmaned person, deeply ascetic, in full control of his passions, dedicated to serenity. Your majesty placed round his neck a dead snake

19 That you lifted with the end of your bow. He was then keeping a vow of silence. He forgave you; but his son did not.

20 You have today been cursed by him without his father's knowledge. Seven nights from now Takṣaka will be the cause of your death.

21 Śamīka asked his son again and again to pardon you, but not even he can nullify his curse.

22 Because he is unable to pacify his angry son, but wishes you well, he has sent me to you."

23 These dreadful words brought back to the contrite king memory of his impious deed.

24 And when he recalled that the ṛṣi was at the time on a vow of silence, he was doubly struck by penitence.

25 Recalling the great kindness of the ṛṣi in contrast to his own insulting deed, he grieved all the more.

26 King Parīkṣit, who looked like a god, would not have grieved so much for his own death as he did for his misbehaviour towards the ṛṣi.

27 He sent Gauramukha away, saying, "May the revered ṛṣi think kindly of me."

28 After Gauramukha had left, he immediately summoned his ministers and anxiously consulted them.

29 After the consultation, the wise monarch ordered a palace erected on a single pillar, to be closely guarded day and night.

30 Around the palace, he stationed, for his safety, physicians with medicines, and Brahmins skilled in mantras.

31 Thus guarded, he carried on the royal responsibilities, assisted by his loyal ministers.

32 There was no way of approaching the king in that palace. Even the air had difficulty entering the edifice.

33 On the seventh day, the best of Brahmins Kāśyapa came to the palace to console the king,

34 Because he had heard of the curse, and he knew that Takṣaka the lord of snakes would spirit the king away to the abode of Yama.

35 He said to himself, "I will cure the king when the snake bites him. In this way I will acquire great wealth – and much merit too."

36 The snake king Takṣaka saw Kāśyapa hurrying with the intention of saving the king, and accosted him in the guise of a Brahmin.

37 The snake king said to the bull-brave-ṛṣi Kāśyapa, "Why the hurry, sir? What business is so urgent?"

38 Kāśyapa replied, "Today Takṣaka, best among snakes, is going to kill the great foe-chastiser, King Parīkṣit of the Kaurava dynasty.

39 I go there, friend; I have no time to lose. I will save the immeasurably powerful Kaurava monarch when the king of snakes, as fierce as Agni, bites him."

40 "I am Takṣaka," said Takṣaka, "and I mean to kill that king. Stop! You cannot save a man whom I bite."

41 "I am Kāśyapa," said Kāśyapa, "and I have much learning. Step aside! I mean to go there, and save the man whom you plan to bite."

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 "Prove to me, Kāśyapa, that you can save a person bitten by me. Revive this tree!

2 Best among Brāhmins, look! I sting this banyan and I reduce it to ashes. Show me the mantra power that you were just now boasting of."

3 Kāśyapa said, "If this is your will, O snake, go ahead: sting the tree. I will revive it, though you destroy it."

4 Challenged by the illustrious Kāśyapa, the king of snakes stung the *nyagrodha* tree.

5 Bitten, poisoned, the tree burst into flame.

6 And the snake turned to Kāśyapa. "Most brilliant of Brāhmins, this tree is yours – revive this lord of the forest."

7 The tree was now a heap of ashes. Kāśyapa picked up a fistful of ash and said:

8 "Witness the magic of my mantra! I revive the lord of the forest in your very presence!"

9 Saying which, the noble and wise Kāśyapa resurrected the ashy tree with his wisdom:

10 First a sprout appeared, then two leaves on it; then the stem, the branches, and then the full, leaf-filled tree.

11 Takṣaka saw that the tree had really been revived, and said: "Nothing all that remarkable, O Brahmin –

12 Your being able to neutralise my poison or that of other snakes. But tell me, ṛṣi, what do you hope to gain by going there? What wealth, O ascetically wealthy one?

13 I will give you whatever wealth you hope to get from the king, no matter how difficult it may be to find it.

14 I doubt that you will succeed in your mission, O Brahmin. The king has a Brahmin's curse on him; he hasn't long to live.

15 In that case, what will happen to your fame which now straddles the three worlds? It will vanish, like the sun in eclipse."

16 Kāśyapa replied, "I go for wealth. Give me enough gold, O snake, and I will return."

17 "I will give you more gold than you can ever dream of getting from the king," said Takṣaka. "No need for you to go to him."

18 Mahā-disciplined Kāśyapa listened carefully to Takṣaka's words, and sat down in profound concentration.

19 His divine insight revealed that the king's span of life had indeed run out, so taking all the gold he desired from Takṣaka,

20 He retraced his steps. No sooner had he left than Takṣaka sped towards Hastināpura.

21 On his way, he learnt that the king had taken every possible precaution and protected himself with a variety of poison-neutralising mantras and medicines.

22 So he thought out a plan. *I must use my māyā to trick him. But how?*

23 He got some snakes to disguise themselves as ascetics, and sent them to the king with fruits, kuśa grass, and water.

24 "Go to the king, and tell him you have come on urgent business," he said. "But don't show impatience. Simply get him to accept the gifts you bring."

25 The snakes did as instructed (Sauti went on), and presented fruits, kuśa grass, and water to the great king,

26 Which he accepted. The gift-giving over, he asked them to retire,

27 And the nāga snake-ascetics left the palace. The king summoned his courtiers and friends, and said:

28 "Eat with me these delicious fruits brought by the ascetics."

29 Impelled by Fate and the ṛṣi's words, the king and his ministers decided to eat the fruits.

30 The king picked up the fruit in which Takṣaka had secreted himself. O Śaunaka, just as he was about to bite into the fruit,

31 An ugly worm-like copper-coloured and black-eyed insect emerged from it. The king took it between his fingers and said:

32 "The sun is setting.
I am no more afraid.
May this insect, who is Takṣaka,
bite me.
May my misdeeds
be forgiven;

33 May the words of the ṛṣi
become true."
Impelled by Kāla,
the counsellors approved
of the king's speech.

34 He smiled.
He knew his hour had come.
As if in a trance,
he placed the insect on his forehead.

35 And Takṣaka, worm of the gifted fruit, looped himself round the king's neck.

36 With a piercing scream, the coiled king of snakes swiftly stung that royal protector of the world.

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 The ministers saw their king in the coils of Takṣaka, became pale, and began to grieve greatly.

2 And, hearing the screams of Takṣaka, they fled (continued Sauti). Even as they scattered, they saw the king of snakes, marvellous Takṣaka,

3 Flash through the sky
Like a streak of lotus,
Like the vermilion line
In the centre parting
Of a girl's thick, dark hair.

4 And the palace of the king flared up suddenly, ablaze with venom. The ministers dispersed helter-skelter, and the king toppled over, as if struck by lightning,

5 And died, killed by Takṣaka's poison. The ministers, the royal priest and holy Brahmins performed his last rites.

6 The citizens assembled and placed the young son of their dead king on the throne. They named him Janamejaya, the hero of the Kauravas, the foe-chastiser.

7 Janamejaya, best of kings, though only a boy was gifted with wisdom. With the help of his royal priest and ministers, the eldest son of Parīkṣit ruled his kingdom as efficiently as his great-grandfather Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 When they saw that he could keep his enemies in check, his ministers went to Suvarṇavarman, the king of Kāśi, requesting his daughter Vapuṣṭamā in marriage with Janamejaya.

9 After making enquiries, the king of Kāśi gave his daughter to the mighty hero of the Kaurava race, who, virginal till his marriage, received her happily.

10 Like Pururavas after winning Urvaśī,
He roamed his kingdom in search of pleasure,
Near lakes and woods and flower-filled fields.

11 And Vapuṣṭamā, happy with her lord,
Loveliest of ladies Vapuṣṭamā,
Famed for her beauty, devoted to her husband,
Loved him deeply, and pleased him greatly.

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 It was around this time (Sauti went on) that Jaratkāru of mahā-tapasyā became a *yatrasāyaṁgṛha* ṛṣi and roamed all over the world, making the spot where evening fell his home for the night.

2 He bathed in various sacred waters, and completed many sacred vows that others found most difficult to practise.

3 He lived on air, freeing himself from worldly longings; he became thin and emaciated. In this condition he saw the spirits of his ancestors, suspended head downwards in a hole

4 By a rope of *vīraṇa* roots, all roots frayed except one, and a large rat living in that hole was nibbling at the unfrayed root.

5 They hung there without food, thin, pitiable, hoping to be saved. Jaratkāru approached the unfortunate ones, and humbly asked:

6 "Who are you hanging
by the vīraṇa rope,
suspended head downwards
while the unfrayed root

7 Is nibbled by a rat,
slowly eaten away
by a creature who lives
in the hole where you hang?

8 A thin strand remains.
That too will snap.
And then, you will fall
head downwards, in the hole.

9 Because I am moved
with pity seeing you hang thus,
tell me, O stricken ones,
how can I help you?

10 Tell me quickly:
Will a third, fourth, or half
of my ascetic powers
be of help in your distress?

11 Or if you wish,
take all my ascetic powers.
I am agreeable
to whatever you decide."

12 The spirits of his ancestors replied:
"Venerable brahmacārī,
you who wish to save us,
nothing can save us,
not all your tapasyā.

13 Child, sweet-voiced speaker,
we also were ascetics,
yet we hang in this hell
for we had no offspring.

14 'To have children,' said Brahmā,
'is great dharma.'
We hang in this hole,
confused.

15 Who are you, dear child, *tāta,*
favoured one, venerable one,
grieving-for-us one,
known-the-world-over one?

16 We will tell you
who we are, O Brahmin
who grieves so richly for us –
we are *yāyāvara* ṛṣis, strict-vowed,

17 Who, having no offspring,
fell from holiness.
Our penances have dwindled,
an unfrayed root holds us.

18 One root. That's all.
One. Named Jaratkāru.
Is he living or dead?
It does not matter. Unfortunate,

19 We hang here. Jaratkāru
is learned, wise in the Vedas,
a mahātmā, self-subdued,
a rigid-vowed ascetic.

20 His devotion to tapasyā
is why we are here:
he has no wife, no son,
no relatives.

21 So we hang in this hole,
depressed, forlorn, alone.
Stranger, should you meet him,
from kindness to us, tell him:

22 'Your ancestors are hanging
face downwards in a hole.
O holy one, take a wife,
have children.

23 You are the only thread left
in the line of your ancestors.'
Look, Brahmin: the *vīraṇa* root
by which we hang,

24 Is the thread of our race.
The fibres you see
nibbled by the rat,
already eaten,

25 Are we.
Time has devoured us.
And the fibre you see
half-nibbled,

26 From which we hang,
is the ṛṣi Jaratkāru.
The rat you see
is mahā-powerful Kāla,

27 Steadily devouring
the wretch Jaratkāru
who cultivates yoga, but
lacks prudence and compassion.

28 Tapasyā cannot save us.
The fibres are torn!
We have fallen from grace!
Made fools of Kāla!

29 We fall further and further down,
like wretched scoundrels.
When we plummet deep down
with all our relatives,

30 Devoured by Kāla,
Jaratkāru too will fall in hell.
For tapasyā, sacrifices,
and other holy acts,

31 Are inferior, O child,
to having a son.
You have seen all this.
Explain it to the ṛṣi.

32 Be our saviour, O Brahmin,
be kind to us, tell him all.
Persuade him to marry,
to have a son.

33 But who are you, shining one,
standing compassionate
before us, with grief befitting
a friend of the ṛṣi and our race?"

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 Jaratkāru heard them and was deeply pained. His voice choking with tears, he said to the *pitṛs*:

2 "Spirits of my fathers!
Spirits of my grandfathers!
Show me the right path.

3 I am your guilty son
Jaratkāru. Punish me!
I am he, the wretched one."

4 The pitṛs said:
"Good fortune brings you here, son.
But tell us, why did you refuse to marry?"

5 Jaratkāru replied:
"A single ideal impels me:
To draw inwards my semen,
And take my body to the other world.

6 My firm conviction is not to marry.
But when, O pitṛs, I see you
Hanging here like birds,

7 I am persuaded to forsake celibacy.
I will give up brahmacarya,
I will do whatever you say.

8 I will get a bride of my own name.
She must offer herself to me freely.

9 I will not maintain her, because
She will come to me as a gift.

10 Failing which, I will not marry.
I have spoken the truth. O pitṛs,
Her son will save you. O my fathers,
Never more will you fall from heaven."

11 The ṛṣi said this to his pitṛs and recommenced his wanderings. O Śaunaka, he grew old, but did not find a wife.

12 Unhappy because unsuccessful, he neverthless persisted. One day, in the middle of a forest, he wept out loud.

13 Motivated by his desire to be of service to his pitrs, he said to himself *I will ask for a bride!* three times, uttering each word distinctly.

14 "Whoever you are, moving or unmoving, in this forest, listen to me! Visible or invisible creatures, listen to me!

15 I am a ṛṣi
devoted to tapasyā.
My pītṛs have told me,
'Marry, have a son.'

16 Sorrowing and empty-handed I roam the world, looking for a virgin who will come to me as a gift.

17 If there is any among you
blessed with a daughter,
give her to me, who
am the world's bride-seeker.

18 Her name must match mine,
She must come as a gift,
I will not provide for her.
Bestow such a one on me!"

19 The snakes who had been deputed to keep watch on the movements of Jaratkāru brought this news to Vāsuki.

20 And the king of snakes, taking his richly-ornamented sister with him, hurried to the spot where Jarakāru was,

21 And bestowed her as a gift to the mahātmā ṛṣi who, however, at first declined to accept her,

22 For he thought she might not have the same name as his and, furthermore, the condition of providing for her had not been settled. He thought for a while, hesitating,

23 And finally, O descendant of Bhṛgu, he asked Vāsuki her name, adding, "I do not intend to provide for her."

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 Vāsuki said to Jaratkāru: "Best among Brahmins, this virgin bears your name. She is my sister and an ascetic.

2 The responsibility of maintaining her is mine. Accept her, O ṛṣi. I will give her whatever protection I can; I reared her for you."

3 "On one condition," replied the ṛṣi. "I will not provide for her and she will not do anything that displeases me. If she does, I will leave her."

4 Vāsuki promised to provide for his sister (continued Sauti), and Jaratkāru proceeded to the abode of the snake-king.

5 That learned and strict-vowed mantra-knowing Brahmin accepted her hand in marriage, in accordance with the rites of the śāstras.

6 Praised by other ṛṣis, he took his bride to the enchanting chamber set apart for him by the king of snakes.

7 In that chamber was a bed on which were spread expensive coverlets. He slept there with his bride.

8 And he made an agreement with her, saying, "Say and do nothing that will displease me.

9 Or I will leave you and depart from this house. Keep carefully in mind what I have said."

10 Puzzled and sad, the sister of the snake said, "I will do so."

11 The girl of virginal reputation, eager to do good to her relatives, served her hard-willed husband in the *śvetakākīya* manner, wakeful like a dog, alert like a deer, and as quick to catch a hint as a crow.

12 One day the sister of Vāsuki, after her menstrual period, bathed herself in the ritual manner and had intercourse with the mahā-ṛṣi, her husband.

13 She conceived; and her womb was like the Vaiśvānara fire. It radiated energy: it shone like the god of fire himself.

14 It waxed like the moon in the bright fortnight. A few days later, mahā-illustrions Jaratkāru,

15 Tired, rested his head on the lap of his wife, and slept. While he was sleeping, the sun entered the cave of the western mountains.

16 Daylight faded. The shining sister of Vāsuki, fearing the loss of her husband's ascetic excellence, grew anxious.

17 *What should I do?* she wondered. *Should I wake my dharmātmā husband or no? He is strict and strong-willed. What should I do so as not to offend him?*

18 *His anger on one side – and loss of his dharma on the other. I think loss of dharma is the greater evil.*

19 *If I wake him, he will be furious. But if* saṁdhyā *prayer time passes, he will lose his ascetic merit.*

20 The sweet-speaking snake-sister of Vāsuki made up her mind, and said to Jaratkāru,

21 The resplendent ṛṣi supine like a prostrate sheet of flame, "Wake up, my mahā-favoured lord, the sun is setting.

22 Illustrious ṛṣi of strict vows, it is time to touch water and say your *saṁdhyā* prayers. It is time for the evening sacrifice. It is the time of beauty and awe.

23 My lord, *prabhu*, *saṁdhyā* twilight gently covers the western sky." Jaratkāāru of ascetic excellence woke up and said,

24 His upper lip quivering in anger, "Snake, you have insulted me,

25 I can no longer live with you. I will go back to where I came from. Lovely-thighed lady,

26 It is my firm belief that the sun dare not set as he does so long as I am asleep. No man can stay in the place where he is insulted,

27 Certainly not a ṛṣi with merit like me, or others like me." Her heart trembling with fear, the sister of Vāsuki

28 Said to Jaratkāru, "I did not wake you with the intention of insulting you.

29 I did it because I was afraid you might lose your ascetic merit." The mahā-ṛṣi Jaratkāru,

30 Anger-obsessed and bent on forsaking his wife, said, "I have never broken my word. I must go.

31 I made an agreement with you and your brother. Lovely lady, the time I passed with you was happy. Tell your brother,

32 When I am gone, that I have left you. And when I am gone, do not grieve over my going."

33 Anxiety and sorrow overcame the lovely-hipped bride Jaratkāru. Her eyes filled with tears, her face

34 Paled with fear, her voice choked with sobs. The lovely-thighed lady folded her palms in *añjali* with patient courage,

35 And said to the ṛṣi Jaratkāru, "You are wise in dharma, It is not right of you to desert me.

36 I know you are steady in dharma. So am I. I have always worked for the good of others. O best among Brahmins, the purpose for which I became your wife

37 Remains unaccomplished. What will I tell Vāsuki, unfortunate as I am? Noble ṛṣi, the son desired by my relatives, who are

38 Afflicted by their mother's curse, is yet to be born. The welfare of my relatives depends on the son you will father.

39 I beg of you, do not desert me. I implore you for the sake of my relatives. Do not make my marriage with you fruitless, O Brahmin!

40 Excellent lord, you are a mahātmā – why do you forsake one who has committed no fault? I cannot understand it."

41 The mahā-ṛṣi Jaratkāru made the following suitable and dignified reply to his wife:

42 "Fortunate lady, the child in your womb is like Agni himself. He is a ṛṣi, a most excellently virtuous master of the Vedas and their branches."

43 Saying this, the noble ṛṣi Jaratkāru went away, his heart fixed again on the practice of severe tapasyā.

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 Soon after her husband had left (continued Sauti), Jaratkāru went to her brother and told him what had happened.

2 Even more distressed than his distraught sister after he heard the terrible news, Vāsuki said to her:

3 "Sweet sister, you know why you were bestowed on the ṛṣi. If a son is born from your marriage,

4 He will be responsible for the deliverance of our race from the snake-sacrifice. Brahmā Pitāmaha promised as much to the gods in the distant past.

5 Fortune-favoured one, are you with child? My heart's one hope is that my bestowing you on that wise ṛṣi has not been fruitless.

6 I know it is not proper of me to enquire like this, but the gravity of the matter forces me to.

7 For I do not plan to try to bring your husband back. He is engaged in strict tapasyā and may even curse me.

8 Tell me, sweet sister, in detail, what he did, and ease me of the cruel pain of this dart in my heart."

9 Jaratkāru consoled the king of snakes Vāsuki by giving him a detailed reply.

10 "When I asked the mahātmā of mahā-tapasyā if I was going to be pregnant, the mahātmā ṛṣi replied 'Thus' and went away.

11 I cannot recall a single occasion when I heard him speak an untruth even as a joke. Why should he therefore lie now? He said to me,

12 'Daughter of the snake-race, do not be anxious about the fruit of our union. A son, lustrous like fire, will be born to you.'

13 O my brother, my husband said this and left me. Do not, therefore, nourish any sorrow in your heart."

14 Vāsuki, king of snakes, accepted the words of his sister, saying, "May all be well."

15 Then he honoured his sister with deep respect, high praise, and expensive gifts.

16 The refulgent embryo waxed like the moon in the bright fortnight,

17 And when her time came, the sister of the snake-king gave birth to a god-like son, destroyer of the fears of his paternal and maternal relatives.

18 He grew up in the palace of the king of snakes. He studied the Vedas and related branches of knowledge from the mahā-ṛṣi Cyavana, son of Bhṛgu.

19 When still a child, he took rigid vows; he was gifted with keen intelligence and virtue. The world knew him as Āstīka,

20 Which means "Thus", for that was the word his father had used when leaving for the forest, at the time he was still in his mother's womb.

21 Though still a child, he was deeply disciplined and learned, full of sattva-guṇa. He was reared with great affection and care in the snake-king's palace.

22 He was like golden-radiant Śūlapāṇi-Śiva himself, wielder of the trident, Deveśa, lord of the gods. And as he prospered daily, great was the happiness of all the snakes.

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 Śaunaka asked: "Tell me again, in detail, all that king Janamejaya asked his ministers about his father's going to heaven."

2 Sauti replied: This is what the king asked his ministers and what they replied about Parīkṣit's death –

3 Janamejaya said, "You know all that happened to my father and how he died.

4 After you have told me all about my father, I will do what is proper for me to do. Otherwise, I shall do nothing."

5 Sauti added: The virtuous and wise ministers heard the words of the mahātmā king Janamejaya, and said:

6 "Listen to our reply, O king. What follows is an account of your father's life and death.

7 Your father was virtuous, and noble, and a great protector of his subjects. This is how he conducted himself on earth:

8 Virtuous-natured, virtue-seeking,
He protected the four castes,
Supervising carefully the duties of each.

9 Blessed with fortune, incomparably brave,
He protected the goddess earth.
He hated none; none hated him.

10 Like Prajāpati himself,
He looked on all with equal eyes.
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras,

11 In their different duties, O king,
Were equally protected by him,
As were widows, orphans, the maimed and the poor.

12 He was handsome, like a second Soma,
He kept all happy and prosperous
With truth-speaking and great prowess.

13 He was the disciple of Kṛpa,
in the science of bowcraft;
O Janamejaya, your father
was loved by Govinda-Krishna.

14 He was loved by all.
he was born in the womb
of Uttarā when the Kaurava race
was almost wiped out.

15 So he was called Parīkṣit,
'The Last of the Line'.
He studied all the treatises on monarchy,
he had all the noble qualities.

16 He disciplined his senses, and served dharma,
he cultivated his mind.
He subdued the six passions;
lust, greed, anger, infatuation, pride, envy;
he imbibed carefully the śāstras.

17 He ruled over his subjects for sixty years. The entire kingdom mourned when he died. After him, O best among men,

18 The kingdom devolved on you in line of succession. The Kaurava dynasty has ruled over it for the last thousand years. You were installed when still a child."

19 Janamejaya said: "None in my dynasty neglected the welfare of his subjects, none was not beloved of the people. Take specially the case of my grandfathers, the five Pāṇḍava brothers.

20 How did my father, possessor of so many virtues, meet his death? Tell me everything exactly as it happened. I am eager to hear it."

21 Asked by the king, the well-wishing ministers of Janamejaya repeated what had happened.

22 The ministers said: "O rājā, that monarch, the world's lord, faithful to the śāstras, gave himself up to the pleasure of hunting,

23 Like that best among bowmen, Pāṇḍu of incomparable prowess and courage. All state affairs he left in our hands.

24 One day he entered a forest where he wounded a deer. Armed with bow and quiver, he chased it,

25 Alone, on foot. But the deer eluded him, however hard he searched.

26 He was sixty years old, and he tired easily. Fatigue and hunger oppressed him. He came on a mahātmā ṛṣi in that forest,

27 And addressed him. But the ṛṣi was on a vow of silence and did not reply.

28 The exhausted and hungry king flared up at the ṛṣi sitting silent and motionless on a stump of wood.

29 In fact, your father had no idea that the ṛṣi was on a vow of silence, and on an impulse insulted him.

30 O excellent Bhārata, he lifted up a dead snake with the end of his bow and placed it on the ṛṣi's neck.

31 But the holy man did not say one word, good or bad, nor did he lose his temper. He remained as he was, with the snake round his neck."

SECTION FIFTY

1 The ministers continued: "Having placed the snake on the ṛṣi's shoulder, the tired and hungry king returned to his capital.

2 Now, the mahā-illustrious ṛṣi had a son, born of a cow, named Śṛngi, famous, mahā-energetic, variously talented – and irascible.

3 He would daily go to his preceptor and offer him pūjā-respect. One day, on his preceptor's instructions, Śṛngi was returning home

4 When a friend informed him of your father's insult to his father. O tiger-among-rājās, he heard that his father,

5 Sitting motionless on a stump of wood, and completely without fault, had a dead snake placed on his shoulder –

6 The great ṛṣi's shoulder,
Best among ṛṣis,
Passion-subduer,
A man of holiness,
Of wonderful deeds,
Tapasyā-rich yogī,
Sense-controlled soul,

7 Sweet of speech, and
Sweet of action,
Always serene, never selfish,
Never mean, never avaricious,
An elderly ṛṣi committed
To the vow of silence,

8 The refuge of all creatures.
Such was the ṛṣi who was
Insulted by your father.
And the son of the ṛṣi,
Furious, cursed your father.

9 Though young in years, he shone with ascetic excellence. He quickly touched water, and said in anger,

10 Referring to your father, and flaming with glory, 'Witness my tapasyā powers! Takṣaka, the lustrous, virulent nāga,

11 Seven nights from today, will burn with his poison the wretch who placed a dead snake on the shoulder

12 Of my innocent father.' And immediately he hurried to where his father was meditating.

13 He saw his father and recounted the manner of his curse. The noble ṛṣi sent to your father

14 A soft-spoken and virtuous disciple named Gauramukha. Gauramukha rested briefly, and narrated the ṛṣi's words before the king:

15 'You have been cursed, mahārāja, by my son. Takṣaka will burn you with his poison. Be warned, O king.'

16 O Janamejaya, your father heard these ominous words and took every possible precaution against the mighty snake Takṣaka.

17 On the seventh day, Brahmā-ṛṣi Kāśyapa decided to go and meet the king.

18 The king of nāgas Takṣaka intercepted Kāśyapa, and without wasting time asked, 'What is your hurry? Where are you going?'

19 'I am going to king Parīkṣit, the best among the Kauravas,' replied Kāśyapa, 'because today the snake Takṣaka is going to kill him.

20 I am in a hurry because I have the power of reviving him.'

21 'I am Takṣaka,' said Takṣaka. 'Why do you want to revive the king I will kill? I have incurable poison!

22 You cannot revive him after I have stung him.' Then and there, Takṣaka bit a banyan.

23 The tree-lord of the forest became a heap of ashes. But Kāśyapa resuscitated the tree, O rājā.

24 Takṣaka, tempting him, asked, 'What do you want?' and Kāśyapa replied,

25 'Gold.' Takṣaka said softly to the mahā-ṛṣi Kāśyapa,

26 'Take more gold from me, O faultless one, than you can ever expect from the king – and go back.'

27 Persuaded by the snake, and taking with him as much wealth as he asked for, the great ṛṣi retraced his steps.

28 As soon as he had gone, Takṣaka, disguised, entered the palace of your father, a man of dharma,

29 In spite of all the precautions your father had taken, and killed him with fiery poison. You were then installed on the throne.

30 O best of kings, we have told you all that we saw and heard. It is a cruel story.

31 O best of kings, you have now heard how your father, the ruler of the world, Parīkṣit, was assassinated by Takṣaka, and how the ṛṣi Uttaṅka was insulted by Takṣaka.

32 The great foe-chastiser rājā Janamejaya (continued Sauti) addressed all his ministers:

33 "From whom did you hear this wonderful story of Takṣaka reducing the banyan to ashes,

34 And its equally wonderful revival by Kāśyapa? If Kāśyapa had been given the chance to neutralise Takṣaka's poison with his mantras, my father would not have died.

35 That ill-minded scoundrel of a snake must have thought, *If the Brahmin revives the king whom I bite,*

36 *I will become the laughing-stock of the world.* So he tempted the good ṛṣi Kāśyapa.

37 But I have devised a means of punishing him. Tell me what you heard or saw in the heart of the deep forest,

38 Specially the encounter between Takṣaka and Kāśyapa. When I know that, I will have my plan ready for the annihilation of the snake race."

39 The ministers said, "Your majesty, this is how we came to know of the encounter in the forest between the foremost Brahmin and the king of snakes –

40 A man had climbed the banyan to gather dry branches for sacrificial fuel.

41 Neither the Brahmin nor the snake saw him. He was reduced to ashes, along with the tree.

42 And when, O Indra-among-rājās, the tree was revived, he regained life too. That man came to us,

43 And recounted in detail all that occurred between Takṣaka and Kāśyapa. That is how we were able to tell you the story. The rest, O tiger-brave king, is up to you."

44 Rājā Janamejaya heard his ministers, and rose in deep grief. He squeezed his hands.

45 The lotus-eyed king breathed long and hot sighs. He sobbed in uncontrollable sorrow.

46 Drowning in grief, he touched water, paused as if making up his mind, and said to all his ministers:

47 "I have heard from you the full story of my father's going to heaven.

48 And I have made up my mind. No time should be wasted in taking revenge on Takṣaka,

49 Who killed my father. This scoundrel killed the king, using Śṛṅgi as a pretext.

50 What except wickedness made him prevent Kāśyapa from going to my father? Had Kāśyapa gone, my father would still be alive.

51 What harm could have fallen on Takṣaka if the efforts of Kāśyapa and the ministers had brought my father back to life?

52 It was foolish of him – he should not have stopped the illustrious Brahmin Kāśyapa from going to my never-defeated-in-battle father.

53 The insolence of Takṣaka! He dared to give gold to the Brahmin to prevent him from saving my father!

54 I will revenge myself on my father's enemy, and please myself, please Uttaṅka, and please all of you."

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 The ministers approved of the king's speech (Sauti continued), and the king announced his intention of performing a snake-sacrifice.

2 The ruler of the earth and the best among Kauravas, the son of Parīkṣit, rājā Janamejaya summoned his priest and the ṛtviks,

3 And convincingly set before them his great plan. "I must take revenge on that wretch Takṣaka.

4 What should I do? Is there any way I can consign Takṣaka and all his friends and relatives

5 To extinction? I will burn him in fire as he burnt my father with poison."

6 The ṛtviks said, "O rājā, there is a sacrifice specially devised by the gods for you. It is known as the snake-sacrifice and it is mentioned in the Purāṇas.

7 Its execution is in your hands, O lord of men, and no one else's. People learned in Purāṇic lore have told us there is indeed such a sacrifice."

8 When he heard this, the rāja-ṛṣi thought Takṣaka as good as dead, reduced to cinders in the blazing fire.

9 So the rājā informed the mantra-knowing Brahmins, "I will perform the sacrifice. Prepare all the formalities."

10 Accordingly, the ṛtviks, learned in the śāstras, measured (according to the prescribed rules) a portion of land for the yajña platform.

11 Innumerable holy Brahmins graced the occasion; expensive offerings were placed on the platform,

12 In accordance with the rites of the snake-sacrifice. Before, however, the yajña formally commenced,

13 Something happened that was interpreted as an ill omen. At the time of the construction of the platform, a man

14 Of the Sūta caste, well-versed in the Purāṇas and skilled in masonry and foundation-laying, declared:

15 "The ground of this platform and the time of its erection indicate that the yajña will never be completed – and for this a Brahmin will be responsible."

16 Consequently, the king, before his installation on the platform, ordered the gate-keepers, "Let no one enter here unless he has my special permission."

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 The snake-sacrifice commenced. The different priests of the sacrifice, in the hierarchy of their ritual duties, dressed in black garments,

2 Their eyes red from the acrid smoke, poured ghee oblations in the fire to the chanting of mantras.

3 Spreading terror and trembling among all the snakes, whose names they uttered, they fed ghee into the mouth of Agni.

4 And the snakes in piteous paralysis fell in heaps in the fierce fire.

5 Sighing deeply,
Hugely swollen,
Tails and heads entwined,
In thousands they fell
In the fierce fire.

6 White.
Black.
Blue.
Old.
Young.
Krośa-
Long.

7 Yojana-
Long.
Gokarṇa-
Long.
Crying.
Falling.
Aflame.

8 Hundreds and thousands.
Tens of thousands.
Hundreds of thousands.
Thousands of thousands.
In death's paralysis.

9 Horse-shaped.
Elephant's-trunk-
Shaped.
Musth-elephant-
Mahā-bodied-and-mahā-powerful.

10 Many-coloured.
Fierce-poisoned.
Fearful-looking.
Like iron-spiked maces.
Mahā-powerful and venomous.
Mother-cursed.
Fire-consumed.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 Śaunaka asked: "Who were the mahā-ṛṣis officiating as ṛtviks in the snake-sacrifice of the wise ruler Janamejaya of the Pāṇḍava dynasty?

2 Who were the *sadasyas* in the terrifying sacrifice which brought fear and calamity on the snakes?

3 Give us all this in detail, child, that we may have a record of those who were familiar with the formalities of a snake-sacrifice."

4 Sauti said : The ṛtviks and sadasyas who were appointed by the king for the snake-sacrifice were:

5 First, the Brahmin Caṇḍabhārgava of Cyavana's race; he was the foremost among those learned in the Vedas and he became the *hotṛ*;

6 The learned old Brahmin Kautsa became the *udgātṛ*; Jaimini the *brāhmaṇa*; and Śārṅgarava and Piṅgala the *adhvaryus*;

7 Vyāsa with his son and disciples; Uddālaka, Śamaṭhaka, Śvetaketu, Pañcama,

8 Asita, Devala, Nārada, Parvata, Atreya, Kuṇḍajathara, the Brahmin Kālaghaṭa,

9 Vātsya, old Śrutaśruva, who engaged themselves in japa and study of the Vedas; Kohala, Devaśarma, Maudgalya, Śamasaubhara,

10 And many other enormously learned Brahmins became sadasyas at the mahā-ritual performed by the son of Parīkṣit.

11 The ṛtviks poured ghee in the fire:
Fierce and fearful snakes fell into the fire.

12 Snake-marrow and snake-fat
fed the river-like fire,
a stench of roasting snakes
polluted the air.

13 Pitiful the screams of snakes
fallen in the fire,
pitiful the screams of those
falling in it.

14 As soon as the king of snakes Takṣaka heard that Janamejaya had commenced the snake-sacrifice, he hurried to Indra,

15 Explained everything to him, acknowledged his fault, and fearfully begged for protection.

16 Indra, pleased, said, "O Indra-of-the-nāgas, Takṣaka, have no fear of the snake-sacrifice.

17 I have personally pleaded to Brahmā Pitāmaha on your behalf. Do not be afraid. Make your mind calm."

18 Pacified, Takṣaka stayed back in Indra's heaven and passed his days in joyful luxury.

19 But Vāsuki's agony was inconsolable, when he saw his race, falling one by one in the incandescent conflagration,

20 Reduced to a handful and facing extinction. His heart pounding, he said to his sister,

21 "Sweet sister,
My limbs are burning,
I cannot see clearly,
The points of the heavens are unclear.
Giddiness overcomes me.
My mind whirls.

22 My vision is blurred.
My heart trembles.
I am numb.
I am falling
falling
in the fire . . .

23 The son of Parīkṣit, Janamejaya,
has one aim only –
to wipe out our race by this yajña.
It seems I must go
to the land of Yama,
the rājā of the spirits of the dead.

24 Sweet sister,
the time has come.
Save us!
This was the reason
I gave you to Jaratkāru.

25 O finest of ladies of the snake race,
Āstīka will put an end to this slaughter.
Brahmā Pitāmaha himself told me this.

26 Sweet sister,
ask your dear son,
learned in the Vedas and respected by the elders,
to save me, and those dependent on me."

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 Sauti said: The snake-lady Jaratkāru called her son Āstīka and repeated to him everything that Vāsuki, the nāga-rājā, had told her.

2 "My son, the time has come to fulfil the purpose for which my brother bestowed me on your father. Do what needs to be done."

3 Āstīka asked, "What was the reason, mother, my uncle bestowed you on my father? Tell me, so that I may do what needs to be done."

4 Jarakāru, the nāga-rājā's sister, eager to do good to her race and moved to pity by their suffering, said:

5 "Kadrū was the mother of the snakes, my son. Let me explain to you why she cursed her sons in anger.

6 She said to her sons, 'You have refused to change the colour of Ucchaiḥśravas' tail, and made me a slave of Vinatā according to the wager she and I made;

7 Therefore the wind-driven god of fire will consume you in Janamejaya's sacrifice. You will die and be taken to the realm of the wandering spirits of the dead.'

8 Brahmā Pitāmaha sanctioned her curse by exclaiming, even as she uttered it, 'Be it so.'

9 Vāsuki heard the curse and its sanction and approached the gods for protection after the churning of the ocean was over.

10 The gods, grateful because the incomparable amṛta had come in their hands, approached Brahmā in a group, led by rājā Vāsuki.

11 All the gods sought to obtain the grace of lotus-born Brahmā to render the curse on the snakes inoperative.

12 The gods said,
'Lord, Bhagavan,
Vāsuki grieves for his relatives.
How will his mother's curse
be nullified?'

13 Brahmā replied,
'Jaratkāru will marry
Jaratkāru.
The twice-born born to her
will save the snakes.'

14 O Āstīka, god-like son, Vāsuki heard this, and he gave me in marriage to your mahā-ātmaned father some time before the sacrifice was due to start.

15 You were born of that marriage. The time has now come. It is your duty to save us.

16 Save my brother from the fire.
Save me from the fire.
Fulfil the purpose of my marriage.
What are you thinking, my son?"

17 Sauti continued: Āstīka said, "I will." Turning to Vāsuki, he added, as if infusing new life in him,

18 "Vāsuki, best among snakes, I will be your saviour. Believe me, I will protect you from the curse.

19 Do not worry, O snake. You have nothing to fear. I have promised to do my best.

20 Not even in jest has my word not been kept. There is no need for me to reassure you on a serious occasion like this.

21 I will go the best of kings Janamejaya, now busy with the sacrifice. I will speak sweetly to him, mixing blessings with words, so that he stops the yajña.

22 O mahā-minded Indra-of-snakes, O noble Vāsuki! Believe me when I say this. I promise to keep my promise."

23 Vasuki said:
"O Āstīka, my head spins
with my mother's curse; I am punished
by Brahmā! My heart shakes; I cannot see
the points of the heavens."

24 Āstīka replied:
"Refrain from grief, O finest of the nāgas!
Dispel your fear of the fire.

25 I will cancel this mahā-fearful punishment
you call Brahma-daṇḍa,
burning like the fire of Kāla at doomsday.
Enough! Cast off your fears."

26 In order to save the king of snakes, Āstīka, noble Brahmin, dispelled the fearful fever in Vāsuki's heart,

27 And speedily and determinedly went to the yajña of Janamejaya where every possible merit and piety was present.

28 Āstīka saw the splendid sacrificial enclosure, filled with sadasyas shining with the glory of Agni or the Sun.

29 But the doorkeepers at first refused to admit him in; so the ṛṣi, determined to enter, flattered them.

30 Entering the enclosure, the best of Brahmins Āstīka paid his homage to the rājā of illustrious feats, the ṛtviks, the sadasyas, and the sacred fire.

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 Āstīka said:
"Yajña of Soma, yajña of Varuṇa,
Prajāpati's yajña, performed in Prayāga!
But the yajña of Janamejaya is equal in glory.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas!

2 Śakra-Indra performed one hundred yajñas,
But the yajña of Janamejaya is equal in glory.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas!

3 Like the sacrifices of Yama, Harimedha,
and rājā Rantideva is the sacrifice of Janamejaya.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas!

4 Like the sacrifices of Gaya, king Saśabindu,
and king Vaiśravaṇa is the sacrifice of
Janamejaya.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas.

5 Like the yajñas of Nṛga, Ajamīḍha,
and the son of Daśaratha is the yajña of
Janamejaya.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas.

6 Like the yajña of Yudhiṣṭhira, son of a god
and descendant of Ajamīḍha, is the yajña of
Janamejaya.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas.

7 Like the yajña of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, Satyavatī's son,
with himself the head priest, is Janamejaya's
yajña.
Blessed are they who are dear to us,
O son of Parīkṣit, best of the Bhāratas.

8 Shining like the sun, they sit at your sacrifice,
make it equal to the yajña of Indra, the slayer of
Vṛtra.
There is nothing they do not know,
the gifts they receive are inexhaustible.

9 There is no ṛtvik like you,
O Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.
Your disciples become ṛtvitks of excellence,
and travel all over the world.

10 Fire has gold for semen, Vibhāvasu,
fire is the mahātmā bearer of libations, Citrabhānu,
emits black smoke as he goes on his way
carrying your offerings of ghee to the gods.

11 There is no king in the world like you
for protecting his subjects.
Your discipline and abstinence are pleasing to me.
You are like Varuṇa, Dharmarāja, and Yama.

12 You are the guardian of the world's creatures,
like Indra, wielder of the thunderbolt, Vajrapāṇi.
There is none in the world so puissant as you,
no king your equal in yajña.

13 You are like Khaṭvāṅga, Nābhāga, and Dilīpa,
like Yayāti and Māndhātā in courage.
You are splendid like the sun, Āditya,
O splendid-vowed rājā, you are like Bhīṣma.

14 You are like Vālmīki in secret power,
you are like Vasiṣṭha in controlling your anger.
Your sovereignty is like Indra's,
your lustre like Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu.

15 You dispense dharma like Yama,
you are a storehouse of guṇas, like Krishna.
You are the focus of the wealth of the Vasus,
you are the source of all rituals.

16 You are equal in strength to Dambodbhava,
skilled equally in sāśtras and weapons like
Paraśurāma.
You rival the mahā-ṛṣis Aurva and Trita in might,
like Bhagīratha, you are awesome."

17 With this adoration, Āstīka pleased them – the rājā, the sadasyas, ṛtvikas, and the sacred fire. Rājā Janamejaya looked around him, saw the signs and indications, and said:

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 “He is but a boy,
but he speaks like a wise old man.
He is no boy; he is old and wise.
I will give him a boon.
O Brahmins, give me permission.”

2 The sadasyas said:
“A Brahmin, specially a learned one,
though a boy, deserves a king’s respect.
His wishes should indeed be granted,
but not before Takṣaka arrives here.”

3 The king (continued Sauti), eager to grant the Brahmin boy a boon, said, “Ask any boon.” The hotṛ, displeased, said, “Takṣaka has not come here yet.”

4 Janamejaya said, “Get the ritual observances finished soon. Use every means, and see that Takṣaka gets here without delay. He is my enemy.”

5 The ṛtviks said : “O rājā, Takṣaka is now in the abode of Indra, afraid. The śāstras have revealed this to us, and Agni has declared it.”

6 The mahātmā Sūta, Lohitāka, well-versed in the Purāṇas, had said as much on an earlier occasion. Asked now by the rājā, he repeated his words.

7 “O rājā, what the Brahmins say is true. Because I know the Purānas, I am able to say this: Indra has granted a boon to Takṣaka to the effect that if he stays in concealment, fire cannot harm him.”

8 The king, supervising the sacrifice, was angered by this and ordered the hotṛ to do his duty. The hotṛ poured ghee into the fire and chanted mantras. And Indra himself,

9 The mahā-radiant god, decided to descend in his chariot; around him stood gods in deep adoration; entertaining him were gandharvas and many cloud-embraced apsarās.

10 But Takṣaka the nāga hid himself inside the folds of Indra's upper garment. The king, bent on the destruction of Takṣaka, said to his mantra-knowing Brahmins:

11 "If Takṣaka is still in the abode of Indra,
Cast him into the fire with Indra himself."

12 Ordered by king Janamejaya, the hotṛ repeatedly poured libations in the yajña, invoking the hidden Takṣaka by name.

13 As the libations increased in number and frequency, harassed Indra and fearful Takṣaka were glimpsed briefly in the sky.

14 Puraṁdara-Indra saw the sacrifice and, terrified, he cast off Takṣaka and fled to his abode.

15 When Indra had left, the fear-paralysed, Indra-of-the nāgas Takṣaka was dragged by the shakti of mantras inside the sacrificial enclosure.

16 The ṛtviks said, "It is over, O Indra-of-rājās Janamejaya, the ritual is successful. May your majesty now be pleased to grant a boon to his foremost of Brahmins, Āstīka."

17 Janamejaya replied,
"Immeasurable one,
Handsome one,
Child-like one,
I grant you a boon,
Ask your deepest desire.
Even the most ungrantable
I will today grant."

18 The ṛtviks said:
"Your majesty, look!
Takṣaka is in your hands!
His mahā-screams and roars
Are heard all around us.

19 The thunderbolt-wielder Indra
Has forsaken the nāga Takṣaka.
Our mantras have disabled
The king of snakes; he falls
From the sky, somersaulting,
Paralysed, sighing deep sighs."

20 Just as Takṣaka was on the point of dropping into the fire
– at that very moment Āstīka decided, *Now is the time*,
and said;

21 "The boon I ask, O Janamejaya, is this: *Stop the sacrifice;*
let no more snakes fall in the fire."

22 The son of Parīkṣit, Janamejaya, visibly agitated, said to
Āstīka:

23 "Take gold, silver, cattle,
Take whatever else you will.
O shining one,
Do not stop this yajña."

24 Āstīka replied:
"Gold, silver, and cattle,
I do not want, O rājā.
Let this yajña end,
And my mother's progeny be saved."

25 Janamejaya heard, but again and again said to Āstīka,
best among speakers,

26 "Best among Brahmins, best of the Bhārgavas, some other boon! Blessed one, some other boon!" But the obdurate Brahmin would not ask any other boon,

27 And finally the sadasyas, well-versed in the Vedas, exclaimed in one voice to the rājā: "Let the Brahmin's boon be granted!"

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Śaunaka said: "Sūta's son, give me the names of all the snakes that fell in the sacred fire..

2 Sauti replied : Thousands; tens of thousands; millions and billions – so many I am unable to count them all.

3 But let me recall at least the names of the principal snakes that perished in the fire.

4 Let me first give you the names of the important members of Vāsuki's family – blue, red, and white snakes, mahā-bodied, fierce-venomed, and fearful-formed.

5 Cursed by their mother, these helpless and unfortunate ones fell in the fire like libations of ghee:

6 Koṭika, Mānasa, Pūrṇa, Saha, Paila, Halīmaka,
Picchala, Kauṇapa, Cakra, Kālavega, Prakālana,
Hiraṇyabāhu, Śaraṇa, Kakṣaka, Kāladaṇḍaka.

7 These, of Vāsuki's immediate family, were consumed in the fire. Many other mahā-powerful and terrible snakes of the family of Takṣaka, also died. They were;

8 Pucchaṇḍaka, Maṇḍalaka, Piṇḍasektha,
Rabheṇaka,
Ucchikha, Bhaṅga, Bilvatejā, Sarabha, Virohaṇa;

9 Śili, Śalakara, Mūka, Sukumāra, Pravepana,
Mudgara, Śaśuromā, Suramā, Mahāhanu.

10 These were of Takṣaka's family. What follows is a list of the names of Airāvata'a family:

11 Pārāvata, Pārijāta, Paṇḍara, Hariṇa, Kṛśa,
Vihaṅga, Śarabha, Meda, Pramoda,
Saṃhatāpana.

12 Then the snakes of Kaurava's family – I give you a list, O excellent Brahmin, of their names:

13 Eraka, Kuṇḍala, Venī, Veṇīskandha, Kumāraka,
Bāhuka, Śṛṅgavera, Dhūrtaka, Prātra and Ātaka.

14 Next the wind-swift and terribly poisonous snakes of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's family – I give you a list, O Brahmin, of their names:

15 Śaṅkukarṇa, Pīṭharaka, Kuṭhāra, Mukasesaka,
Pūrṇnāgada, Purṇamukha, Prahāsa, Śakuni, Dari;

16 Āmāhaṭha Kāmaṭhaka Suṣeṇa, Mānasa, Avyaya,
Bhairava, Muṇḍavedāṅga, Piśaṅga, Udraparāga;

17 Ṛṣabha, Vegavān, Piṇḍaraka, Mahāhanu,
Raktāṅga, Sarvāsaraṅga, Samṛddha, Paṭavāsaka,

18 Varāhaka, Vāraṇaka, Sucitra, Citravedika,
Paraśara, Taruṇaka, Maṇiskandha, and Aruṇi.

19 Those are the names of the snakes famous for great feats. It is not possible for me to name them all; they are too many.

20 It is not possible for me to give you the names of the sons of those I have named, and their sons' sons, all of whom perished in the fire. They are too many.

21 Some had three heads, some seven, some ten. Their poison was like the doomsday fire of Kāla. They were awesome to look at.

22 They had mahā-bodies, moved at great speed, and were tall as hills. Some were a *yāma* long, some a *yojana*, and some two *yojanas*.

23 They could change shape at will, summon strength at will; they had flame-like poison. Punished by Brahmā, they perished in thousands in the mahā-sacrifice.

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Sauti continued: There was another marvellous incident in connection with Āstīka. When rājā Janamejaya was about to grant the boon to Āstīka,

2 The snake, flung by Indra's hands, remained suspended in mid-air. Rājā Janamejaya reflected on this for a while,

3 For Takṣaka, though paralysed with fear, would not fall into the fire, no matter how many ritual libations were poured in the yajña in his name.

4 Śaunaka asked : "Were the mantras not potent enough, O Sūta? What prevented Takṣaka from falling in the fire?"

5 Sauti replied: Almost as soon as Indra flung Takṣaka away, Āstīka intoned thrice, "Stop! Stop! Stop!"

6 And the benumbed snake was arrested in his descent, like a man hanging between earth and the sky.

7 Urged by the sadasyas, the rājā said, "It will be done as Āstīka wishes.

8 Let the sacrifice cease. Let the snakes go free. Let Āstīka be satisfied. Let the words of the Sūta be proved true."

9 Loud peals of joy rose to the sky when the king granted Āstīka's boon. The sacrifice of the son of Parīkṣit, Janamejaya,

10 Rājā of the Paṇḍava dynasty, was stopped. And Janamejaya was pleased that he had done what he had done.

11 To the ṛtviks and sadasyas, and all others present at the snake-sacrifice, he gave hundreds and thousands of coins.

12 To the Sūta Lohitākṣa, learned in masonry and foundation-laying, who before the snake sacrifice commenced

13 Had warned the king that a Brahmin would interrupt the rituals, he gave much wealth, food, and clothing.

14 Janamejaya, king of great charities, pleased, ordered the termination of the sacrifice and sanctified himself with the ritual *avabhṛta* bath.

15 He treated the virtuous-saṁskāra-ed Āstīka with great respect, and joyfully sent him home. Āstīka's happiness was great, for he had accomplished what he set out to do.

16 The king said to him, "You must come here again as a sadasya when I perform my mahā-ritual, the aśvamedha horse-sacrifice."

17 Āstīka replied, "I will," and joyfully returned home. He had achieved his object, and also pleased the king.

18 Joyfully he touched the feet of his maternal uncle Vāsuki and his mother, and told them what happened.

19 The snakes who had assembled there heard him carefully and their delight knew no bounds, for their fears were now all dispelled. So pleased were they that they insisted Āstīka should ask a boon.

20 Again and again they said:
"Learned one,
What can we do for you?
You have saved us.
We are pleased.
Child, what do you want?"

21 Āstīka said, "Let the twice-born and all others who, at morning or evening, cheerfully and carefully read this sacred story of dharma, have no fear of you."

22 The snakes replied joyfully:
"Granted, O nephew!
Exactly as you wish it.
Whatever you have asked us,
We will do cheerfully.

23 Whoever invokes, at day or night,
Asita, Āstīka, and Sunītha,
Need have no fear of snakes.

24 'I invoke
Mahā-illustrious Āstīka, born of Jaratkāru
By Jaratkāru, saviour
Of snakes Āstīka!
O mahā-favoured snakes, do not harm me!

25 Lustrous snakes, leave me!
Snakes of good fortune, go from me!
Fierce-venomed snakes, harm me not!
Remember the words of Āstīka,
At the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya!'

26 If, after mention of Āstīka,
A snake still bites,
His hood shall be sliced
Like *śiṁśa* fruit in a hundred pieces."

27 Mahātmā Āstīka heard this and, pleased, decided to leave.

28 This dharmātmā Brahmin Āstīka who saved the snakes from slaughter at the sacrifice, died when his time came, leaving behind many sons and grandsons.

29 This is the story of Āstīka, exactly as it happened – a story that, whenever narrated, dispels fear of snakes.

30 O best of Brahmins of the Bhṛgu race, exactly as your ancestor Pramati gladly narrated this story to his curious son Ruru,

31 And exactly as I heard it, have I narrated to you again, this dharma-rich history of the learned Āstīka.

32 O foe-chastising Brahmin, I hope your great curiosity is satisfied with this sacred dharma-increasing story of Āstīka, which you asked me to narrate after you heard the story of the dundubha-snake.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Śaunaka said : "Sauti, my child, I am pleased with you, for you have well narrated this long and impressive history of the progeny of Bhrgu.

2 Narrate to us now the epic of Vyasa, the varied and inspiring stories that were recited

3 To the mahātmā sadasyas in the intervals of their duties as officiating priests of that protracted snake sacrifice.

4 I would also like to learn from you, O son of Sūta, the subjects of the narrations. Recite them all before me."

5 Sauti replied: The Brahmins, during the intervals, discoursed on various stories taken from the Vedas. But Vyāsa recited the marvellous and mighty epic of the *Bhārata*.

6 Śaunaka said : "I am eager to listen to the narrative called the *Mahābhārata*, which disseminates the glory of the Pāṇḍavas

7 And which Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, at Janamejaya's request, recited in full during the snake-sacrifice.

8 Born in the oceanic mind
Of this māhā-ṛṣi of purified ātman,
That gem-filled story, O son of Sūta,
I would like to hear.
Great is my thirst."

9 Sauti said:

I will recite the *Mahābhārata*,
Kṛṣna-Dvaipayana's mighty and marvellous narrative,
from beginning to end.

10 Listen to every word of it,
O, twice-born one,
as I recite it.
To recite it
is a great pleasure.

SECTION SIXTY

1 When the learned ṛṣi Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa heard that Janamejaya had initiated the snake-sacrifice, he went there (continued Sauti).

2 The grandfather of the Pandavas was born on an island in the Yamunā. His mother was Kāli, his father Śakti's son Parāsara.

3 From his birth he disciplined his body by his will-power, and mastered the subtleties of the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, and *itihāsas*.

4 He was mahā-illustrious; he achieved the unachievable; even tapasyā, studying the Vedas, vọws, fasts, and yajñas cannot achieve what he did.

5 It was he, the best of Veda-knowers, who first arranged the Vedas in four divisions. He was a Brahmarṣi, a man of truth, a pure ascetic, a poet, an inseeing *kavi*.

6 That maharṣi of holy deeds and maha-fame fathered Pāṇḍu, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Vidura in order to continue the line of Śāntanu.

7 Accompanied by his disciples, all well-versed in the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas, mahātmā Vyāsa entered the sacrificial enclosure of the rājarṣi Janamejaya.

8 He saw rājā Janamejaya seated there surrounded by his sadasyas, like Puraṁdara-Indra surrounded by the gods.

9 Around him were kings of various countries who had completed their lustrations, and many ṛtviks, each like Brahmā himself.

10 The rāja-ṛṣi Janamejaya, best of the Bharata race, saw from a distance Vyāsa approaching, and quickly, followed by his relatives and courtiers, came forward to greet him.

11 With the approval of the sadasyas, the king offered a golden seat to the ṛṣi, as Indra once did to Bṛhaspati.

12 When the boon-granting pūjā-honoured ṛṣi had seated himsef among the deva-ṛṣis, Indra-among-rājās Janameja offered him pūjā-respect, as prescribed in the sāstras.

13 And the king next offered to his grandfather Kṛṣna-Dvaipāyāna water to wash his feet and mouth, *arghya*, and cattle.

14 Vyāsa graciously accepted the pūjā from the Pāṇḍava Janamejaya, and was pleased with the care shown to the cows in the sacrificial enclosure.

15 Pūjā-respect over, king Janamejaya bowed before his illustrious grandfather, sat down happily, and enquired about his welfare.

16 Bhagavān Vyāsa looked around him and asked about the welfare of everyone present; after which he honoured the sadasyas, who had earlier offered him pūjā-respect.

17 Janamejaya did añjali to Vyasa and, with the sadasyas, said to the greatest of Brahmins:

18 "You have seen with your own eyes
The deeds of the Kauravas and Pandavas.
Tell us, O great Brahmin, their story.

19 What made them fall apart,
Such great heroes of such splendid deeds?
What led to that terrible war

20 In which hundreds of thousands perished,
Including my ancestors? Did Fate blind them?
O best of Brahmins, give us the whole story."

21 Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana heard the request of king Janamejaya and, turning to his disciple Vaiśampāyana by his side, said:

22 "Repeat, exactly as you have heard from me,
The story of the discord between the Kauravas
and Pāṇḍavas."

23 Vaiśampāyana, best of Brahmins, ordered by his guru, repeated the entire history

24 To the king, the sadasyas, and all the Ksatriyas and potentates present at the sacrifice.

25 He told them all about the discord and the total extinction of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 Vaiśampāyana said:
With all my mind and all my heart,
I namaskāra my guru,
All eight parts of my body touching the ground.
I offer my pūjā-respect

2 To all Brahmins here,
To all learned persons,
Before I recite in full what I heard
From Maharṣi Vyāsa, mahā-atmaned Vyāsa,
Foremost of men of wisdom.

3 You are a fit person, O rājā,
To hear the epic of the Bharatas.
I have no qualms in reciting it to you.
The words of my guru have encouraged me.

4 Listen, O rājā, to the full story
Of the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava conflict,
Of the gambling match and the exile,
Consequent on the struggle for power,

5 And of the all-exterminating war.
I will relate all this to you,
O bull-brave Bharata, at your bidding.

6 When their father died, the Pāṇḍava heroes returned to their home from the forest. In no time they became expert in the art of archery.

7 This made the Kauravas jealous, for the Pāṇḍavas were blessed with strength, stamina, and will-power. They were popular with the citizens.

8 Ill-minded Duryodhana, Karṇa and the son of Subalā mistreated them and even tried to get them banished.

9 Valiant Duryodhana, urged by Śakuni, his scheming maternal uncle, began persecuting the Pāṇḍavas in order to obtain unchallenged control of the kingdom.

10 Duryodhana, the wicked son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, mixed poison with Bhima's food, but wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma was able to digest the poison along with the food.

11 One day Duryodhana chanced upon Bhīma sleeping on the bank of the Gaṅgā, trussed him up and threw him in the river, and fled.

12 Luckily mahā-muscled Bhīmasena, Kunti's son, awoke, tore apart the ropes binding him, and surfaced with no ill effects.

13 While asleep, he was stung all over his body by viciously-venomous black water snakes, but the great foe-slayer did not die.

14 The Kauravas indulged in many such outrages against their cousin-brothers, and Vidura tried his best to thwart their plans and save the victimised Pāṇḍavas.

15 Like Śakra-Indra in heaven
Keeping earth-creatures happy,
Vidura did all he could
To prtoect the Pāṇḍavas

16 When Duryodhana found that he was unable to harm the Pāṇḍavas who, having been elected for grave purposes, were protected by Fate,

17 He summoned his counsellors, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana, and others and, with Dhṛtāraṣṭra's knowledge, ordered a lacquer house to be built.

18 And Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Ambikā's son, because he loved his own children and was possessive of kingship, sent the Pāṇḍavas away in exile.

19 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas went away with their mother from Hastināpura. Vidura, the Vaiśya woman's son, gave them a hint of the trap,

20 At night they escaped into a dense forest. The sons of Kuntī went to the city of Vāraṇāvata,

21 And stayed there, with their mother, in the lacquer house, as instructed by Dhṛtārāṣṭra.

22 They lived in the house for one year, and kept a constant vigil for Purocana. In the meanwhile, following Vidura's advice, they had begun digging a tunnel,

23 On the completion of which they set fire to the lacquer house and burnt Purocana alive in it. Fearful and anxious, the great foe-slayers slipped away with their mother Kuntī.

24 Near a waterfall in the forest a rākṣasa named Hinḍimba accosted them, and they killed him. Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons, apprehensive of Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons, again fled

25 In the darkness, afraid that they had exposed themselves. It was at this time that Bhīma married Hiḍimbā, sister of the rākṣasa; their son was named Ghaṭotkaca.

26 The strict-vowed Pāṇḍavas, well-versed in the Vedas, moved next to the town of Ekacakra, and lived there in the guise of brahmacārīs.

27 Bull-brave men, they stayed in the house of a Brahmin, passing their days in temperance and discipline.

28 Here wolf-waisted, mahā-muscled Bhīma clashed with a gigantic, hungry man-eating rākṣasa called Baka;

29 The son of Pāṇḍu tiger-among-men Bhīma, slew him with his prowess, and restored confidence among the citizens.

30 Getting news of the svayamvara of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, daughter of the king of Pāñcāla, they went to Pāñcāla and won her.

31 They spent one year there with their wife Draupadi; after which the great foe-chastisers, their identity being revealed, returned to Hastināpura.

32 The son of Śāntanu, rājā Dhṛtārāṣṭra, said to them, "Dear children, to prevent internecine quarrels,

33 We have decided that you should live in Khāṇḍavaprastha. Cast aside all jealousies, go to Khāṇḍavaprastha,

34 And live in that well-settled area. And the Pāṇḍavas, as advised,

35 Went to Khāṇḍavaprastha, taking with them wealth in the form of jewellery and precious stones, and stayed there for many years.

36 They used their skill in arms to subjugate many local chiefs and rulers. Motivated always by dharma, and professing truth,

37 Calm in demeanour, unruffled by success, suppressing all pettinesses, they gained more power. Mahā-famed Bhīma undertook the conquest of the East;

38 Arjuna subjugated the North; Nakula, the West; and Sahadeva, mighty foe-slayer, the South.

39 Their dominion now extended over all the known world.

Like suns they shone,
All of them –
Like five suns;

40 And it seemed that the earth
Was blessed with six suns.
Then, for a certain reason,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣthira

41 Despatched his powerful younger brother Savyasācī Arjuna; the skilful ambidexterous

42 Arjuna, tiger-among-men, gifted with every virtue, passed eleven years and a month in the forest.

43 It was during this period of wandering that, on one occasion, he went to meet Krishna in Dvārakā and married the lotus-eyed.

44 Sweet-speaking younger sister of Krishna, Subhadrā.
Like Śacī with Mahendra-Indra,
Like Śrī -Lakṣmī with Krishna,

45 Was Subhadrā with Arjuna,
The son of Pāṇḍu,
Happily united.
Then, O best of kings,

46 Bībhatsu-Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Krishna
Gratified Agni
Who burnt down Khāṇḍava forest.
With Keśava-Krishna's help,
The task was easy,

47 As easy as Viṣṇu
Destroying his enemies.
And Agni gave Arjuna
The divine bow Gāṇḍīva,

48 An inexhaustible quiver,
And a war-chariot
Flying the ape-pennant.
This was when Bībhatsu-Arjuna rescued Maya
The maha-anti-god.

49 Maya gratefully constructed the exquisite celestial palace, studded with jewels and precious stones. Wicked Duryodhana saw it and desired it for himself.

50 So, conniving with Śakuni, he tricked Yudhiṣṭhira in the dice-game, and had the Pāṇḍavas exiled to the forest for twelve years,

51 With one more year to be passed in concealment, making a total of thirteen years. In the fourteenth year, the Pāṇḍavas returned and claimed their kingdom,

52 Which, mahārāja, they were refused. War was declared, and the Pāṇḍavas, after killing Duryodhana and slaughtering the entire Kṣatriya race, recovered their kingdom.

53 This is the story of the Pāṇḍavas whose courage never flagged. This is the story, O best of kings, of the discord in that kingdom, which ended in victory for the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 Janamejaya said: "Best among Brahmins, I have listened carefully to your synopsis of the *Mahābhārata,* summarising the great deeds of the Kauravas.

2 What I would like to hear now is the full story. I can hardly contain my curiosity.

3 Let me have the entire story in all its details. I am not satisfied hearing it in a condensed form.

4 It cannot be that some trivial cause moved the dharma-knowing Pāṇḍavas to kill those whom they should not have killed; or why are they still honoured by men?

5 Why did those finest among men, innocent yet full of śakti, calmly allow themselves to be victimised by the Kauravas?

6 Best of Brahmins, why did the powerful-armed Bhima, with strength equalling that of ten thousand elephants, keep check on his anger, though variously wronged?

7 And why did not the virtuous Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, when insulted by the Kauravas, burn the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra with her angry eyes?

8 Why did the two sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī and the two sons of Mādrī follow Yudhiṣṭhira, addicted to the dice-game, despite being deceived?

9 And why did dharma-knowing Yudhiṣṭhira, finest of dharma-upholders, the son of Dharma himself, suffer so many humiliations patiently?

10 With Krishna himself as his charioteer,
Why did the son of Pāṇḍu, Arjuna, endure
The persecutions, when he could with his arrows
Send whole hosts of warriors to the other world?

11 O tapasyā-rich one, explain to me all this.
Tell me everything the mahā-chariot-warriors did."

12 Vaiśampāyana replied : Your majesty, select a time for this long history. This is only the beginning. I will recite the whole story,

13 As composed by Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, the mahā-ṛṣi mahā-ātmaned Vyāsa of incalculable mental energy, who is offered pūjā-respect by all the worlds.

14 The epic has
one hundred thousand ślokas
by Satyavatī's son,
infinite-minded Vyāsa, describing
the noble deeds of the Pāṇḍavas.

15 Who reads it to others,
who hears it read –
both find Brahmā's world
and become equal to gods.

16 This equals the Vedas,
it is sacred and splendid,
worthiest of narrations,
this ṛṣi-adored Purāṇa.

17 It is full of advice
on Artha and Dharma;
this mahā-meritorious itihāsa stirs the heart
to seek perfection.

18 And learned men who recite
this Veda of Krishna to the noble,
truthful, liberal, and believing,
earn great wealth.

19 It absolves one of crimes,
even the great crime
of killing a foetus.
Anyone

20 Who hears it, escapes,
like the moon from Rāhu,
all his crimes. This Epic of Victory called Jaya
is appreciated by victory-seekers.

21 The king who listens to it
subjugates the world.
It is like a mighty prayer,
a maha-fruited yajña.

22 Princes and their wives
should listen to it
to beget a brave son
or a daughter for the throne.

23 Infinite-minded Vyasa says :
it is the Dharma-śāstra,
it is the Artha-śāstra,
and the Moksa-śāstra.

24 It is recited in the present,
it will be recited in the future;
its listener gets sons and servants
obedient to his wishes.

25 Its listener escapes instantly
from all demerits
of body or word
or of mind.

26 Diseases will not afflict him,
nor fear of the other world,
who listens,
without cynicism, to this story
of the mighty, Bharata dynasty.

27 To extol the Pāṇḍavas
and other Kṣatriyas, famous
for their learning and heroic deeds,
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana,

28 For the world's welfare,
composed this epic,
splendid and sacred,
of stupendous size,

29 Increasing one's fame,
and bringing long life.
Who, from goodness,
has pious Brahmins recite it,

30 Gains inexhaustible merit.
Whoever himself recites
this history of the Kaurava dynasty,
gains Sanātana Dharma

31 His family multiplies,
he is given pūjā-respect by all.
And the Brahmin who reads
the *Mahābhārata* regularly

32 For the four rainy months
is washed of his demerits.
A reader of the *Bhārata*
becames learned in the Vedas.

33 Described in it are :
the gods, the rājarṣis,
the brahmarṣis,
the glory of Keśava-Krishna,

34 The god of gods Siva,
Devī Parvatī,
the birth of Kārtikeya,
who had many mothers;

35 The glory of Brahmins,
the glory of cows.
All śrutis are in it,
it is fit for all dharma-minded people.

36 The learned man who recites it
to Brahmins during the lunar changes,
cleansed of all demerits, transcends heaven,
and becomes one with the eternal Brahman.

37 A rājā who listens
to a reading of the *Mahābhārata*
enjoys dominion of the entire world.
A pregnant woman
gives birth to a son,
An unmarried girl
finds a husband,

38 A travelling trader
finds his travels fruitful.
A brave soldier
gains victory.
Brahmins who avoid fault-finding
should listen to this epic.

39 Brahmins studying the Vedas,
Ksatriyas aiming at victory,
Vaisyas pursuing their sva-dharma –
should listen to this epic.

40 Of all dharmas,
the *Mahābhārata* is the best dharma.
Listen to it, O rājā,
from the mouths of Brahmins

41 Who listen to it regularly
achieves the highest realm.
Listening daily to one śloka
or even a half-śloka will do

42 What is fruitless
is never listening to it.
It describes the births
of mahā-ātmaned rājarṣis.

43 Mantras
Dharmas
Darshans of all kinds
Wondrous battles
The glories of rājās

44 Stories of ṛṣis
Gandharvas
Rakṣasas
Vivid discussions of varied subjects

45 Descriptions of places of pilgrimage
Countries
Forests
Mountains
Rivers
Oceans

48 Holy lands
Ancient cities
Marvellous deeds
How to welcome and honour guests –

49 The yoga of civilised etiquette
Are all in the *Mahābhārata*
Of the foremost ṛṣi Vyāsa –
Including descriptions
Of chariot, horse, and elephant
war strategy.

50 Everything is in this epic,
elegantly narrated.

51 A single line from it recited
to Brahmins at a śrāddha,
makes the obsequies endless,
and gratifies the pitṛs.

52 Impurities committed daily
by our senses and our mind,
impurities committed by a person
knowingly or unknowingly,

53 Are wiped out when
the *Mahābhārata* is recited,
which narrates the history
of the Bharata dynasty.

54 And he who knows its etymology
is cleansed of all demerits.
Mahā-wonderful is
this history of the Bharatas,

55 It removes mahā-demerit
whenever it is recited.
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana
took three years to finish it;

56 Rising early,
purifying himself,
performing tapasyā,
the maharṣi composed this epic

57 For which reason should Brahmins
read faithfully
this sacred history,
this composition of Vyāsa.

58 Brahmins reciting it before others,
those hearing it,
will never be affected by *Why did I do this*?
and *Why did-I not do this?*

59 The man desirous of dharma
should hear it in full.
It is all the world's epics,
it brings fulfilment.

60 The bliss of attaining heaven
is not equal
to the bliss that one gets
on hearing this mahā-meritorious *Mahābhārata*.

61 The virtuous man who hears it,
who orders this wonderful story read with śraddhā,
obtains all the fruits of
a rājasūya or asvamedha yajña.

62 Like the mighty, bhagavān ocean,
like the mahā mountain, Meru,
the *Mahābhārata*
is a mine of gems.

63 It is pure, it is splendid,
it is the sacred śruti,
worthy-of-being-heard, pleasing to hear,
heart-cleansing, peace-providing.

64 O rājā, a copy of the *Mahābhārata*
given to one who asks for it,
is like giving a present of
the sea-girdled earth.

65 This is the history of victory,
a pleasing and sublime story,
O son of Parīkṣit, Janamejaya,
which I will now recite. Listen.

66 For three years the ascetic muni
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana
daily composed this marvellous
Mahābhārata.

67 O bull brave Bharata,
what is in this epic
on Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mokṣa,
may be elsewhere.
What is not in this epic,
is nowhere else."

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 Vaiśampayana continued: There was a rājā named Uparicara, a dharma-following monarch, fond of hunting.

2 His real name was Vasu, of the dynasty of Puru. Directed by Indra, he overran and annexed the splendid, lovely kingdom of Cedi.

3 Then he discarded violence and, going into seclusion, began to practise tapasyā. The gods, led by Indra, approached him one day,

4 Because they had misgivings that he was planning to take over the leadership of heaven by his tapasyā.

5 The gods said : Lord of the world, take care that dharma on earth does not diminish as a result of your asceticism. Under your protection, dharma will protect others."

6 And Indra said:
"Cherish dharma, O king!
Nourish dharma carefully.
With dharma protected, you
Will achieve the eternal realm.

7 I am of heaven, you of earth.
Yet I hold you as my friend.
I cherish you. O lord of men,
Live in that part of earth

8 Which is delightful, sacred,
Full of animals, corn, and minerals,
Secure like heaven, fertile,
With salubrious climate and varied pleasures.

9 King of Cedi, such is Cedi –
Your kingdom, full of
Riches, jewellery, precious stones,
All manner of mineral wealth.

10 The cities follow dharma
The citizens are honest and happy.
Lies are never heard,
Not even in jest.

11 Sons do not divide the family wealth,
Are solicitous of the welfare of gurus.
Lean cattle are not yoked to the plough,
Or to the goods-carrying cart;

12 Rather, they are well-fed, even fat.
The four castes fulfil their dharmas
Unfailingly in Cedi. Devotee of the gods,
Let nothing in the three worlds be denied you.

13 The magnificent crystal chariot of the gods
Is yours; travel in it,
O king of Cedi,
Like a god in the sky.

14 Be the only mortal
To ride in that excellent chariot,
Traverse the sky like a god,
Though you retain your human body.

15 And my Vaijayanti garland will be yours,
A victory garland of unfading lotuses,
Wearing which,
You will be protected in battle.

16 My garland is yours,
Indra's garland,
Unique, marvellous,
To wear as your distinctive badge."

17 Vaiśampāyana continued : Indra, the slayer of Vṛtra, gave the king a bamboo rod to protect the honest and the peaceful.

18 After a year had passed, the king planted it in the ground as pūjā to Śakra-Indra.

19 And from that time, O rājā, it has been the royal custom to follow Vasu's example and plant a bamboo pole for the worship of Indra.

20 The planted pole is adorned with gold cloth, sprinkled with scent, and decorated with garlands and ornaments,

21 And pūjā thus offered to Indra. To please Vasu, Indra appeared personally in the form of a swan, a haṁsa,

22 To accept the pūjā. And Mahendra-Indra was so gratified observing the auspicious manner of pūjā.

23 That he said to the best of kings Vasu, "Those men, and rājās, who offer me pūjā

24 And happily celebrate the festival in my honour established by the king of Cedi, will gain wealth and victory for their countries and kingdoms.

25 Their cities will prosper; their joy will be boundless." Mahārāja Vasu received this blessing

26 From the mahā-ātmaned chief of the gods, Sakra-Indra. Those people who observe this festival of Maghavan-Indra.

27 With gifts of land, jewels, and precious stones, become, like king Vasu, respected in the three worlds.

28 Vasu, king of Cedi, received Indra's blessing, and, bestowing gifts and performing mahā-yajñas, ruled with dharma.

29 He continued to celebrate Indra's festival. He had five sons of supreme energy and mahā-valour.

30 He appointed them governors in various provinces. His son Bṛhadratha, a mahā-chariot-warrior, was appointed to Magadha.

31 His other sons were Partyagraha and Kusamba (also known as Manivahana); Macchilla and Yadu, both of great prowess and invincible in battle.

32 These, O rājā, were the five sons of that shining monarch, and they founded cities and kingdoms after their names,

33 And established separate dynasties that continued for ages. When Vasu travelled through the sky in the crystal chariot,

34 The gandharvas and apsarās came to pay tribute to mahā-ātmaned Vasu. Because he coursed up in the sky, he was called Uparicara, the Above-Traveller.

35 Flowing beside his capital was the river Śuktimatī, which was once assaulted by a lust-maddened mountain named Kolāhala.

36 Vasu kicked the mountain, and a dent appeared where his foot struck it; and the river slipped out along the curve of the dent.

37 From the intercourse of the mountain and river were born twins. The river, out of gratitude, gave both to Vasu.

38 Vasu, a rājarṣi, royal philanthropist,foe-chastiser, made the river's son his commander-in-chief,

39 And the river's daughter Girikā he made his wife. Girikā, wife of Vasu, after purifying herself by a ceremonial bath during her menstrual period,

40 Approached her husband and told him of her condition. That very day, however, the pitṛs of Vasu came to him,

41 And asked that best and wisest of kings to kill a deer for their śrāddha. The king, unwilling to disobey his pitṛs' command,

42 Set out on a hunting mission. But he could not get Girikā out of his mind, for she was very beautiful, in fact like Srī Lakṣmī herself.

43 In the forest were aśoka,
champak and *cūta*,
atimukta, punnaga, karṇikāra,
vakula and *divya pāṭala,*

44 Coconut, *candana, arjuna*
and other famous trees,
beautiful, sacred, loaded
with fragrant flower and sweet fruit.

45 Heady bee drone
and kokila song
filled the forest.
It was spring,
the forest lovely.

46 Desire stirred in him.
Girika was not near.
Desire maddened him.
He roamed aimlessly; he saw

47 A ravishing aśoka
densely-foliaged, but
so thick with flowers
the branches were hidden.

48 He sat in its shade,
drinking in flower scent
blended with fragrance of honey.

49 He sat there, breathing,
soft winds blowing; and,
maddened with visions of Girikā,

50 There, in the forest,
he had an erection; but,
not wanting a fruitless emission,
he ejaculated on a leaf.

51 He knew it was the time
of his wife's fertile period; so,
after much thinking, *Should I or should I not?*

52 Not wanting his semen
to go waste, and knowing
the period of his wife had come,
that excellent rājā made up his mind.

53 Seeing a falcon swooping beside him, the king, learned in the subtle truths of Artha and Dharma, said,

54 "Gentrle Friend, take my semen to my wife Girikā, who is now in her fertile period, and give it to her."

55 The falcon picked up the semen on the leaf and sped through the sky.

56 On the way, another falcon intercepted him and, thinking that he was carrying a piece of flesh, attacked him.

57 Both slashed at each other with their beaks; and during the fight the semen fell in the waters of the Yamunā.

58 Now, in the river lived a lovely apsarā named Adrikā, in the form of a fish as a result of a Brahmin's curse on her.

59 Adrikā rushed to Vasu's semen where it had fallen from the falcon's talons, and swallowed it.

60 Soon after, she was caught by some fishermen. And, O best among the Bharatas, ten months from the day she swallowed the semen,

61 She gave birth to two human babies – a boy and a girl. The stupefied fishermen went to rājā Uparicara,

62 And said, "O rājā, these two babies came from the womb of a fish!" The king kept the boy,

63 Who later was to become the truth-loving and dharma-following rājā, Matsya. The apsarā recovered her original body as soon as the children were born,

64 Because she had been promised by the shining one who cursed her that her fish-form would be shed after she gave birth to two human babies.

65 So, having given birth to both and having been killed by the fishermen, she discarded her fish-form, gained her celestial body,

66 And followed the path of the ṛṣis, Śiddhas, and Cāraṇas. The fish-smelling daughter of the fish-form apsarā

67 Was given by the rājā to the fishermen with these words, "Let this one be *your* daughter" She was very lovely, she had all the guṇa-qualities,

68 This truth-speaking girl,
Satyavati.
Because she lived with fisherfolk,
she exuded a fish-smell.

69 This sweet-smiling girl plied a ferry boat on the Yamunā in accordance with the wishes of her father. The ṛṣi Parāśara saw her one day in the course of a pilgrimage,

70 This exceedingly lovely girl, whose beauty would inflame even a perfected man. As soon as he saw her, the sweet-smiling one, he desired her.

71 That bull-brave muni said to Vasu's daughter of divine shape and tapering thighs, "Let us make love, gracious one."

72 And she replied, "Holy one, there are ṛṣis standing on both banks of the river. They will see us. How can I?"

73 Bhagavān Paraśara quickly created a fog, which obscured the entire region.

74 When she saw the mahā-ṛṣi create the fog, perplexed, the girl blushed.

75 Satyavatī said "Bhagavan, revered one,
I am a young girl
ruled by my father.
Holy one, if I love you,
I will stain my virginity.

76 My virginity stained,
what will I do,
how can I go home?
how will I live?
O best of the twice-born, think,
and do as you please."

77 Vaiśmpāyana continued: Parāśara, best among Brahmins, was pleased with her words and assured her, "Virgin you will be even if you do this which pleases me.

78 Timid one,
Lovely one,
Ask any boon you like.
Sweet-smiling one,
No boon of mine has failed."

79 She asked for one boon,
That her body become sweet-scented.
And he granted her that.

80 She was delighted.
She was in her fertile period
When she embraced the mahā-ṛṣi.

81 From that day she became
Gandhavatī, the Fragrant One.
Because her scent spread
One full yojana around her,

82 She was called Yojanagandhā.
Immediately after this,
Parāśara returned to his āśrama,

83 And Satyavatī, ecstatic with her boon,
Conceived that same day
From her union with Parāśāra.

84 The child born to her
On an island in the Yamunā,
Was an effulgent boy,
Offspring of Parāśāra.
With his mother's permission,
He became an ascetic.

85 He went away, saying,
"I will come to you, mother,
Whenever you think of me."
In this way was Dvaipāyana
Born to Satyavati by Parāśāra.

86 Dvaipāyana means Island-born,
For he was born on an island.

87 Satyavati, happy,
returned home.
Her body-fragrance
spread a full yojana around her.

88 Her foster-father Dāśarāja –
the fragrance pleased him,
as it pleased all others
Dāśarāja said:
"My child!
You were known as Matsyagandhā,
the Fish-smelling Girl.
Where has the fish-smell gone?
Where did you get this sweet fragrance?"

89 Satyavatī replied:
"Śakti's son is
the mahā-wise Parāśara.
I was rowing a boat
He saw me.

90 He smelt my yojana-strong
fish-smell.

91 His grace dispelled the smell
and gave me
this sweet yojana-strong fragrance."
They heard her story
of the ṛṣi's grace
and were delighted.

92 Vyasa knew that Dharma
Lost one leg at each yuga,
And man's progress and shakti
Followed the course of each yuga,
So, impelled to spread the blessings
Of Brahmā and Brahmins,

93 He compiled the Vedas,
And was called Vyāsa, the Compiler.
Next he taught the four Vedas
And the fifth Veda, the *Mahābhārata*,

94 To Sumanta, Jaimini, Paila,
His own son Śuka, and to me,
His disciple Vaiśampāyana.

95 And the *Bhārata Saṁhitā*
He produced separately, with their help.
Next was born Bhīṣma,
Śāntanu's son, in Gaṅgā's womb,

96 Bhīsma, mahā-valiant and mahā-illustrious.
Now, there was another mahā-illustrious ṛṣi,
Respected for his excellence in the Vedas,

97 Named Aṇimāṇḍavya – innocent –
Yet they accused him of theft,
And impaled him on an iron stake.

98 That mahā-ṛṣi confronted Dharma
And said, "When I was a child,
I impaled a baby bird on a wood splinter

99 It is a crime I remember!
Dharma, I recall none other.
I have done thousand-fold tapasyā –
Must I still suffer for that one crime?

100 More heinous than any crime
Is the killing of a Brahmin.
You have killed me, Dharma,
You will be born on earth as a Śūdra."

101 And, as a result of that curse,
Dharma was born as a Śūdra,
As defectless, rich-in-dharma Vidura.

102 And Sañjaya, the ṛṣi-like Sūta,
Was born of Gavalgaṇa;
And mahā-valiant Karṇa was Sūrya's son
By unmarried Kuntī, who emerged from a yajña-fire.

103 He came from his mother's womb
In full armour, with golden ear-rings.
For the world's welfare, far-famed.

104 Viṣṇu, divinity of the three worlds,
was born to Devakī by Vasudeva;
he is the birthless and deathless One,
creator and lord of the universe.

105 He does not decay, he
is the first Brahmā, he
balances the three guṇas, he
is the first, he
is the essence of creation, he
is without attributes, he
is Prakṛti, he is above all.

106 He is Puruṣa, Viśvakarman, he
is Sattva-Yoga, infinite, he
cannot he unsteadied, he
is haṁsa, he is Nārāyaṇa.

107 He is the Upholder, he
shines, he is the supreme, he
combines all, is without guṇas, he
is the invisible root, he
is the supreme immutable, him
the senses cannot grasp, he
is the universe itself, he
is without beginning, birth or decay.

108 This Puruṣa, Grandfather of all creatures,
and possessor of infinite glory, bodied himself,
for Dharma's sake, among the Vṛṣṇis, Andhaka's
race.

109 Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman, skilled warriors,
of great prowess, well-versed in the śāstras,
vowed to the service of Nārāyaṇa

110 Were born to Satyakā and Hṛdikā.
The semen of the ṛṣi Bharadvāja

111 Was kept in a pot, where it fertilised;
The child of that seed was Droṇa.

112 From Gautama's semen, spilt on a reed-clump,
Were born mighty Kṛpa and his twin sister, Kṛpī,
Mother of great Aśvatthāman by Droṇa.

113 Next to be born was Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
From the sacred yajña-fire itself,
As refulgent as the fire itself;

114 He was born bow in hand
In order to kill Droṇa.
From the sacred fire was born
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, shining lady of loveliness,

115 Fine-featured and captivating.
Next-born was the disciple of Prahlāda,
Nagnajit; he was born as Subala.

116 The rājā of Gāndhāra Subala had a son, Śakuni,
who earned the anger of the gods and who became
the destroyer of Dharma.
Subala had a daughter, Gāndhārī,

117 Who became the mother of Duryodhana.
Both son and mother were adept in worldly matters.
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana's sons
were Dhṛtaraṣṭra, great monarch,

118 And Pāṇḍu the mahā-powerful,
Born in the wombs of the wives of Vicitravīrya.

119 Also to Dvaipāyana was born,
By a low-caste woman, Vidura
Wise and serene, learned in Artha and Dharma.

120 To Pāṇḍu by his two wives were given five sons:
Yudhiṣṭhira the eldest (by Dharma),
Wolf-waisted Bhīma (by Maruta-Vāyu),

121 Radiant arms-wielder Dhanañjaya-Arjuna (by Indra),
Nakula and Sahadeva (by the twin Aśvins),

122 Handsome, loyal, and respectful to gurus and elders.
Wise Dhṛtāraṣṭra had one hundred sons –

123 Duryodhana and others,
And another son, whose name was Yuyutsu,
also called Karaṇa.

124 Decendant of Bhārata, of the hundred,
Duḥśāsana, Duḥśaha, Durmarṣaṇa,
Vikarṇa, Citrasena, Viviṃśati,

125 Jaya, Satyavrata, Purumitra,
And Yuyutsu born of the Vaisya woman,
Were the eleven excelling in chariot-combat.

126 Krishna's sister, by Arjuna,
Had Abhimanyu for son. And Draupadī
Had five sons by the five Pāṇḍavas.

127 They were handsome and learned.
Yudhiṣṭhira's son was Prativindhya,
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhima's Sutosoma,

128 Arjuna's Śrutakīrti, Nakula's Śatānīka,
And Sahadeva's son was mighty Śrutasena.

129 Bhīma had a son by Hiḍimbā
In the forest, named Ghaṭotkaca.
Drupada had a daughter Śikhaṇḍinī,
Transformed later into a male.

130 A yakṣa named Sthūṇa transformed her
For her welfare. In the great war,
Thousands of rājās and chiefs clashed.

131 I could not remember all their names,
Even if I lived for ten thousand years.
What I give you is a list of the principal heroes.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 Janamejaya said: "I would like to hear, O Brahmin, a detailed account of those you have named and those you have not named – and the thousands of other kings,

2 At least tell me in detail the purpose for which these mahā-chariot-warriors, like gods themselves, were born on earth."

3 Vaiśampāyana replied:

Your majesty, that is a mystery
Even the gods cannot fathom.
But let me adore the Self-Born Divinity,
And try to explain.

4 Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma, having for the twentyfirst time slaughtered all the earth's Kṣatriyas, went to the mountain called Mahendra in order to do penance.

5 Since there were no Kṣatriyas left on the earth, Kṣatriya ladies, wishing to be mothers, began to solicit the services of Brahmins.

6 And the Brahmins obliged only when the women were in their period, never out of lust, and never outside the season of their fertility.

7 Thousands of Kṣatriya women conceived as a result of these unions, and many Kṣatriyas of remarkable prowess were born,

8 Many boys and girls who ensured that the Kṣatriya race would thrive. This was the Kṣatriya generation that sprang from Brahmin ascetics and Kṣatriya mothers.

9 The new generation, blessed with long life, prospered. Once again the castes appeared, with Brahmins at the head.

10 Every man then had intercourse with his wife during her fertile period, never lustfully, and never out of her period. Other creatures too –

11 Even the bird species – did the same. O bull brave Bhārata, hundreds of thousands of beings were born; and all prospered.

12 O ruler of the earth,
all followed dharma,
there were no diseases,
all followed dharma,
there was no sorrow.

13 elephant-gaited monarch,
all the wide earth,
ocean-bounded,
all her forests and towns,
were ruled by Kṣatriyas again.

14 And great was the joy
of the three other castes,
secure in the knowledge of dharma-following
Kṣatriyas providing protection.

15 Karma-free and anger-free,
they ruled the earth,
punishing those who
deserved to be punished.

16 Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices,
thousand-eyed Indra,
saw the kings rule well,
showered opportune rains,
and all creatures prospered.

17 No one died untimely.
None had sexual relations
before coming of age.

18 O best of the Bharatas,
from earth to sea-shore
they were all long-lived men.

19 The Kṣatriyas organised, yajñas,
giving wealth to Brahmins;
the Brahmins studied the Vedas,
the Vedāṅgas and Upaniṣads.

20 No Brahmin sold the Vedas,
your majesty; no Brahmin
read them aloud before Śūdras.

21 The Vaiśyas used bullocks to plough,
and would not yoke cows.
lean cattle were carefully fed.

22 Nor were cows milked
till calves had first their fill.
Traders did not use false weights.

23 All men, your majesty,
fixed their eyes on dharma,
to the exclusion of all else.

24 The castes, O tiger-among-men,
Were mindful of their duties.
Their dharma never waned.

25 Trees and fruits
blossomed in season.
Women and cows
bore offspring in season.

26 The Kṛta-Yuga, your majesty,
prevailed on earth.
Earth produced her best creation.

27 O best of the Bharatas,
it was in this happiest of times
that anti-gods took birth in royal families.

28 The anti-gods, sons of Diti,
defeated by the gods,
deprived of heaven and power,
started taking birth on earth.

29 Hoping to regain sovereignty
of this world, your majesty,
they were born among cows,

30 Camels, buffaloes, elephants, beasts of prey,
deer, horses and mules;
among anti-gods and others.

31 O protector of the world,
with so many anti-gods born
and so many being born,
the earth could not protect herself.

32 Some sons of Diti and Danu,
cast off from heaven,
took birth as men,
as haughty and cruel kings.

33 They filled the earth
in various shapes;
from earth to sea-line,
oppression spread.

34 Brahmins were persecuted, by them,
Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras too;
their strength being formidable,
they persecuted all creatures.

35 Looting and killing, O rājā,
all who came in their way,
they roamed all over the world,
these anti-gods.

36 Without dharma, without truth,
insolence-intoxicated,
proud of their strength,
they insulted even āśrama ṛṣis.

37 And the oppressed earth
planned an appeal to Brahmā
for help against the powerful
and resourceful mahā-antigods.

38 Even Śeṣa-Nāga and others
of equal strength
could not hold their own
against these Dānavas.

39 O protector of the earth,
Earth, frightened and oppressed,
approached Brahmā Pitāmaha
for protection.

40 Undecaying Brahmā,
god-ringed Brahmā,
seated, creater of the cosmos,
she saw –

41 Ṛṣi-ringed Brahmā,
apsarā-adored,
gandharva-adored,
god-supplicated.

42 Earth placed her woes
before Brahmā Pitāmaha;
in the presence of the gods
she sought his protection.

43 And he knew in advance
the reason for her visit –
the Omniscient, Self-Born,
supreme Lord of all.

44 He created the worlds, O Bharata descendant,
why should he not know
the minds of his creatures,
even of gods and anti-gods?

45 Mahārāja, the Many-named Lord,
Īśa, Śaṁbhu,
Prajāpati,
said to the earth:

46 "Vasundharā,
queen of wealth,
I will instruct the gods
to come to your rescue."

47 And Brahmā bid her farewell.
Turning to the gods,
he instructed them, saying,
"Go, all of you,

48 Be born on earth, as parts of yourselves,
save her from sorrow,
each according to rank
fight the anti-gods."

49 He addressed the gandharvas
and the apsarās,
"Go, be born on earth
in any shapes you wish."

50 The gods led by Śakra-Indra
heard these words of truth,
right words, fruitful words,
and agreed.

51 Resolved to be earth-born,
  they went to Nārāyaṇa,
the great foe-slayer,
  at Vaikuṇṭha,

52 Nārāyaṇa!
Discus-wielder!
Mace-holder!
Saffron-robed!
Lotus-navelled!
Refulgent divinity
Whose eyes
Are large
And gentle
And slanted.

53 Lord of creatures
Prajāpati!
God of gods!
Omnipotent!
Auspicious
Srīvatsa-symbol
Gracing
His breast!
Adored by all the gods!

54 And Indra said to him,
  "Puruṣottama,
Be an avatara!" And Hari-Nārayaṇa
  Replied, "So be it."

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: So Indra consulted with Hari-Nārāyaṇa regarding his descent as avatāra on earth, together with the rest of the gods.

2 And Śakra-Indra instructed the gods on how they should conduct themselves, and returned from the abode of Nārāyaṇa.

3 The dwellers of heaven, one after the other, took birth on earth for the destruction of the anti-gods and the preservation of the three worlds.

4 O tiger-among-kings, the gods took birth as Brahmins and rājā-ṛṣis;

5 And they slew the Dānavas, rākṣasas, gandharvas, nāgas, and many ferocious creatures.

6 Bull-brave Bharata, so powerful were the gods that the Dānavas, rākṣasas, gandharvas and nāgas were unable to kill them even when they were infants.

7 Janamejaya said, "I am eager to know more about the births of the gods, Dānavas, rāksasas, gandharvas, and apsarās, yakṣas, humans and all other creatures.

8 Tell me in detail about the origins of these beings."

9 Vaiśampāyana said:

> I bow to self-born Svayambhu-Brahmā.
> I shall give you in detail
> The births of the gods and other creatures.

10 Brahmā had six mind-born sons: Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu.

11 Marīci had a son named Kaśyapa, and from Kaśyapa sprang all creatures. To Dakṣa were born thirteen daughters favoured by fortune.

12 O best of kings, the daughters of Dakṣa were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kālā, Danāyus, Siṁhikā, Krodha, Prādhā, Viśvā, Vinatā,

13 Kapilā, Muni, and Kadrū; their sons and grandsons, all brilliantly gifted, are countless.

14 From Aditi, O descendant of the Bhāratas, were born the twelve Ādityas, lords of the universe. I will give you their names in order:

15 Dhatṛ, Mitra, Aryaman, Śakra-Indra, Varuṇa, Aṁśa, Bhaga, Vivasvat, Pūṣan, Savitṛ,

16 Tvaṣṭṛ, and Viṣṇu; the youngest among them was Viṣṇu who was the greatest.

17 Diti had one son, Hiraṇyakaśipu; and the illustrious Hiraṇyakaśipu had five world-famous sons:

18 The eldest was Prahlāda; then Saṁhlāda; the third was Anuhlāda; the fourth Śibi; and the last Vāṣkala.

19 Prahlāda had three sons: Virocana, Kumbha and Nikumbha. Everyone knows this.

20 Virocana's mahā-powerful son was Bali, and Bali's son was Bāṇa.

21 Bāṇa was blessed with good fortune; he was a follower of Rudra-Śiva, and his other name was Mahākāla.

22 O great Bharata, Danu had forty sons, the eldest among them being Rājā Vipracitti.

23 The others were : Śambara, Namuci, Puloman, Asiloman, Keśin, Durjaya, Ayaḥśiras, Aśvaśiras, Aśvaśaṅku;

24 Ganganamūrdhan, Vegavat, Ketumat, Svarbhānu, Aśva, Aśvapati, Vṛṣaparvan, Ajaka;

25 Aśvagriva, Sūkṣma, mahā-powerful Tuhuṇḍa, Iṣupāda, Ekacakra, Virupākṣa, Hara, Ahara;

26 Nicandra, Nikumbha, Kupaṭa, Kapaṭa, Śarabha, Śalabha, Sūrya and Candramas.

27 These were the famous sons of Danu. (Sūrya and Candramas, however, were not by Danu; they are other beings).

28 Besides these, there were the following mighty ten born in Danu's race : Ekākṣa, heroic Mṛtapa, Pralamba, Naraka,

29 Vātāpi, Satrutapana, the mahā-anti-god Satha, Gaviṣṭha, Vanāyu, and the Dānava named Dīrghajīhva.

30 Their sons and grandsons were countless. Siṁhikā gave birth to Rāhu, devourer of the sun and the moon,

31 And to three others: Sucandra, Candrahantr, and Chandrapramardana. Krodhā's numberless children were as wicked as herself.

32 They wére a wrathful, vicious and vindictive lot. Danāyus had four sons, all antigods:

33 Vikṣara, Bala, Vīra, and the mahā-antigod Vrtra. And the sons of Kala were like Kālā himself, all mahā foesmiters.

34 They were among the most illustrious of the Dānavas and were great persecuters of their enemies.

35 The chief sons of Kālā were: Vināṣana, Krodha, Krodhahantṛ, and Krodhaśatru. She had many other sons too, called the Kālakeyas Sukra, a ṛṣi's son, was the preceptor of the anti-gods.

36 The illustrious Śukra, also called Uśanas, had four sons who also become preceptors of the asuras : Atri and three others.

37 They shone like the sun himself, and they set their hearts on reaching the regions of Brahmā. Such is the genealogy, as I have it from the Purāṇa,

38 Of the gods and the anti-gods, both mighty and illustrious. Their sons and grandsons are so many that it is beyond my power to enumerate them.

39 O royal world-protector, Tārkṣya, Ariṣṭanemi, Garuḍa, Aruṇi,

40 Vāruṇi and Aruṇa were the sons of Vinata. Śeṣa, Vāsuki, Takṣaka,

41 Kūrma, Kulika and other nāgas were Kadrū's sons. Bhīmasena, Ugrasena, Suparṇa, Varuṇa,

42 Gopati, Dhṛtārāṣṭra, Sūryavarcas, Satyavāk, Arkaparṇa, Prayuta,

43 Bhīma, Citraratha – all illustrious, wise, self-disciplined – and Śālaśiras; fourteenth in the list, Parjanya;

44 Fifteenth, Kali, and sixteenth, Nārada; these gods and gandharvas were the sons of Muni.

45 Let me list a few more, O great Bhārata : Anavadyā, Manu, Vaṃśā, Asurā, Mārgaṇapriyā,

46 Anūpā, Subhagā, and Bhāsi were the daughters of Prādhā. Siddha, Pūrṇa, Barhin, and famous Pūrṇāyus,

47 Brahmacāri, Ratiguṇa, Suparṇa, Viśvāvasu, Bhānu, Sucandra –

48 These gods and gandharvas were Prādhā's sons. It is also known that Prādhā, by Kaśyapa,

49 Give birth to the divine apsarās : Alaṁbuṣā, Miśrakeśī, Vidyutparṇā, Tilottamā,

50 Aruṇā, Rakṣitā, Rambhā, Manoramā, Keśinī, Subābhu, Suratā,

51 Surajā, and Supriyā. Atibāhu, Hāhtā and Hūhū, and Tumburu – these celebrated gandharvas were Prādhā's sons.

52 Amṛta, Brahmins, cattle, gandharvas, and apsarās were born, according to the Purāṇa, to Kapilā.

53 I have given you an account of the births of all creatures, of gandharvas, apsarās,

54 Nāgas, Suparṇas, Rudras, Maruts, cattle, and holy-hearted Brahmins of noble deeds.

55 This account, read,
Gives long life.
It is sacred,
It is praiseworthy,
Pleasing to the ear.
It should be heard,
And recited to others
In the proper manner.

56 Who reads this account
In the proper manner
Before gods and Brahmins,
Gets much wealth, and fame,
Begets many children,
Gains the excellent world
Of the heareafter.

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : It is well-known that Brahmā had six mind-born sons. But there was another named Sthāṇu. Sthāṇu had eleven greatly-energetic sons;

2 Mrgavyādha, Sarpa, famous Nirṛti, Ajaikapād, Ahirbudhnya, the foe-chastiser Pinākin,

3 Dahana, Īśvara, shining Kapālin, Sthāṇu, and illustrious Bhava – known as the eleven Rudras.

4 Marīci, Angiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu – these six mahā-ṛṣis were Brahmā's mind-born sons.

5 It is well-known that Aṅgiras had three sons: Bṛhaspati, Utathya, and Saṁvarta, all strict-vowed ascetics.

6 The sons of Atri are countless, your majesty; they were deeply learned in the Vedas and were mahā-ṛṣis of serene soul and ascetic fulfilment.

7 The children of learned Pulastya were the rākṣasas, vānara forest-folk, what-men kinnaras, and yakṣas.

8 O rājā, the children of Pulaha were lions, what-men kimpuruṣas, tigers, bears, and wolves.

9 The sons of Kratu-Yajña were the sixty thousand Vālakhilas, as sacred as the yajña, and close friends of Sūrya the sun. They were strong-willed and strong-vowed, and the three worlds acknowledged their greatness.

10 Of serene mind and fulfilled tapasyā, the mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi Dakṣa sprang from the right thumb of Brahmā.

11 The wife of Dakṣa sprang from Brahmā's left thumb. He had fifty daughters by her,

12 All of them lovely-limbed and lotus-eyed. Because he had no sons, he made his daughters his putrikās.

13 O rājā, he bestowed – by divine authority – ten of his daughters on Dharma, twenty-seven on Candra, and thirteen on Kaśyapa.

14 I will give you the names of Dharma's wives, your majesty : Kīrtī, Lakṣmī, Dhṛti, Medhā, Puṣṭi, Śraddhā, Kriyā,

15 Buddhi, Lajjā, and Mati. These were Dharma's ten wives, as decreed by self-born Brahmā.

16 It is common knowledge all over the world that Candra had twenty-seven wives, all of strict and holy vows, and employed in the calculation of Kāla.

17 They are the Nakṣatras and yoginīs, who guide the courses of the worlds.

18 Prajāpati had eight sons, the Vasus. Let me name them: Dhara, Dhruva, Soma, Āha, Anila, Anala,

19 Pratyūṣa, and Prabhāsa. These were the eight Vasus. Dhara, and Brahmā-knowing Dhruva were born to Dhūmrā;

20 Soma and Anila were born to wise Śvāsā. Āha was the son of Rata, and Anala of Śaṇḍilya;

21 Pratyūṣa and Prabhāsa were Prabhātā's sons. Dhara had two sons, Draviṇa and Hutahavyavaha.

22 Dhruva's son is Bhagavān Kāla, who encompasses the worlds. Soma's son was Varcas.

23 By his wife Manoharā, Varcas had three sons, Śiśira, Prāṇa, and Ramaṇa. The sons of Āha were Jyoti, Śama, Śānta, and Muni.

24 Agni's son was handsome Kumāra born in a reed-clump, and because Kṛttikā and others brought him up,

25 He was called Kārttikeya. Then his three brothers: Śākha, Viśākha, and Naigameya. Anila's wife, Śivā, bore him Manojova.

26 And Avijñātagati – these were Anila's sons. And Pratyūṣa's son was the ṛṣi Devala,

27 Who had two sons, both of great wisdom and fortitude. Bṛhaspati's sister, finest among women, who spoke with the wisdom of Brahmā,

28 With the power of her yoga, roamed all over the world, free of attachment – she became the wife of the eighth Vasu, Prabhāsa.

29 She was the mother of Viśvakarman,
mahā-fortune-favoured
Founder of the arts,
Creator of a thousand arts,
The artist of the gods,

30 Celestial chariot-maker,
Carver of ornaments,
Mahā-ātmaned lord of artisans.

31 Because of Viśvakarman's
Divine manufacturing,
Man was able to progress.
So all men offer him pūjā,
Eternal, changeless Viśvakarman.

32 Bhagavān Dharma, dispenser of all delights, emerged from the right breast of Brahmā in the form of a man.

33 He had three excellent sons, who pleased everyone: Śama, Kāma, and Harṣa. Their energy supports the worlds.

34 Kāma's wife was Ratī, Śama's Prāpti, Harṣa's Nandā. O tiger among kings, on them the worlds depend.

35 Kaśvapa was Marīci's son, and Kaśyapa's children were the gods and anti-gods. So he is the cause of existence of the worlds.

36 Mahā-favoured Tvāṣṭrī, in the shape of a mare, became the wife of Savitṛ, and gave birth in the sky to the twin Aśvins.

37 Kaśvapa's wife Aditi had twelve sons, chief among them Indra. The youngest of them is Visnu, preserver of the worlds.

38 There were thirty-three gods in all : 8 Vasus 11 Rudras, 12 Ādityas, Prajāpati and Vasatkāva. I will now give you a list of their progeny, according to their pakṣas, kulas, and gaṇas.

39 The Rudras, Sādhyas, Maruts, Vasus, Bhārgavas, and Viśvadevas were each a pakṣa.

40 Vinatā's son Garuḍa, Aruna, and Brhaspati are counted among the Ādityas.

41 The twin Aśvins, yearly plants, and lower animals are classed among the Guhyakas. These are the gaṇas, your majesty, that I have recited before you.

42 To recite them, to hear them,
Is to be cleansed of demerits.

Next was Bhrgu, who emerged from the heart of Brahmā. Bhṛgu's son

43 Was mahā-learned Śukra, son of a *kavi* poet-seer and himself a poet seer. Commanded by self-born Brahmā to send and withhold rain, to create and remove ruin, he became a planet,

44 And still courses through the sky sustaining creatures of the three worlds. An ācārya of yoga the mahā-learned Śukra became the guru of the gods and Daityas.

45 Bhṛgu's son being engaged in the welfare of all. Bhṛgu fathered another flawless son.

46 Named Cyavana, the Shaking One, sun-effulgent, a famed dharmātmā. He came out of his mother's womb shaking in anger, and so was called Cyavana, and was the cause of his mother's mokṣa.

47 Āruṇi, daughter of Manu, was wise Cyavana's wife. The mahā-formed Aurva was born to her by ripping open her thigh, and so was called Aurva the Thigh-Born.

48 Aurva's son was Ṛcīka who, from his boyhood, showed great physical prowess and spiritual powers. His son was mahā-ātmaned Jamadagni,

49 Who had four sons, the youngest being Paraśurāma. In nobility of character, he excelled his brothers.

50 He was disciplined, expert in the use of war-weapons; he exterminated the Kṣatriyas. Aurva had a hundred sons and the eldest was Jamadagni.

51 These hundred sons had innumerable children, who populated the world. Brahmā had two other sons,

52 Dhātā and Vidhātā, who lived with Manu.

Their sister was Lakṣmī,
Auspicious Lakṣmī,
Lady of lotuses, Devī Lakṣmī,

53 The mind-born sons of Lakṣmī were the sky-ranging horses. Varuṇa's eldest wife Varuṇi was Śukra's daughter.

54 She had a son, Bala, and a daughter, Surā, who delights the gods. And Adharma, the all-destroyer, was born

55 When creatures began to devour each other. Adharma's wife was Nirṛti, from whom were born the rākṣasas called the Nairṛtas.

56 She had three more misdeed-mongering sons: Bhaya that is Fear, Mahābhaya that is Horror, and all-destroying Mṛtyu that is Death.

57 Mṛtyu had no wife and no son, Kākī the She-Crow, Śyeni the She-Hawk, Bhāsī the Hen, Dhṛtarāṣṭrī the She-Goose, and Śuki the She-Parrot

58 Were the five daughters of Devī Tāmarā. Kāki brought forth crows; Śyenī hawks;

59 Bhāsī cocks and vultures; Dhṛtarāṣṭra haṁsa swans and kalahaṁsa-geese;

60 And the Brahmany geese called cakravākas; Auspicious, fair, and sweet-minded Śukī.

61 Brought forth parrots. Krodhā gave birth to nine daughters of uncontrollable temper:

62 Mṛgi, Mṛgamandā, Harī, Bhadramanas, Mātaṅgī, Śārdulī, Śvetā, Surabhī,

63 And the lovely and auspicious Surasā. O best among men, the offspring of Mṛgi are the deer species,

64 The offspring of Mṛgamanda are the bear species and the soft-footed *sṛmara deer*. Bhadramanā's son was Airāvata,

65 The mahā-elephant of heaven; Hari's offspring were the horses, and the agile forest-folk vānaras;

66 The cow-tailed *go-lāṅgūlas* are also Harī's children. Śārdulī gave birth to countless lions and tigers,

67 And leopards and similar beasts. The offspring of Mātaṅgī were all elephants.

68 Śvetā gave birth to the massive swift-gaited elephant called Śvetā. O rājā, Surabhī had two daughters,

69 Rohinī and Gandharvī; she had two other duaghters, Vimalā and Analā.

70 All cattle were Rohiṇī's offspring, all horses Gandharvī's. Analā gave birth to the seven varieties of soft-fruited trees.

71 Analā had another duaghter, Śukī. Surasā had a son Kaṅka. Aruṇa's wife Śyenī gave birth to two mighty and energetic sons,

72 Great Sampāti and Jaṭāyu. Surasā also gave birth to the Punnagas.

73 Vinatā had two sons, world-famous Garuḍa and Aruṇa. O best among men, O wisest of mortals, I have given you

74 The complete genealogy of the chief creatures.

Who hears it is purified, and cleansed of all demerits.
Great knowledge becomes his.
He attains the highest after-life.

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Janamejaya asked : "Noble teacher, I would like to know more about the birth and activities, among men, of the gods,

2 The angi-gods, gandharvas, rākṣasas, lions, tigers, snakes, birds, and other creatures – in fact, of all creatures after they assumed human shapes.

3 Vaiśampāyana replied : O best among men, let me tell you first about the gods and antigod Dānavas who were born among men.

4 The best of the Dānavas, Vipracitti, became Jarāsandha, among men the finest.

5 O rājā the son of Diti named Hiraṇyakśipu became Śiśupāla, known throughout the world as a powerful king.

6 The younger brother of Prahlāda, known as Saṁhlāda, became king Śalya, a bull-brave Bālhīka.

7 The youngest, Anuḥlāda, became Dhṛṣṭaketu, famous hero of this world.

8 The son of Diti named Śibi became the famous monarch Druma on earth.

9 That best among the anti-gods Bāṣkala became king Bhagadatta on earth.

10 The five swift and mahā anti-gods, Ayaḥśiras, Aśvaśiras, Ayaḥśaṅku, Ganganamūrdhan, and Vegavat,

11 O rājā, were all reincarnated as powerful kings in the mighty dynasty of Kekaya.

12 The mahā anti-god known as Ketumat became king Amitaujas, performer of heroic feats.

13 The mahā-anti-god named Svarbhānu became the doer-of-fierce-deeds king Ugrasena.

14 The great anti-god Aśva became king Aśoka of incomparable prowess.

15 Diti's son, the younger brother of Aśva, named Aśvapati, became the mighty king Hārdikya.

16 The mighty anti-god Vṛṣaparvan became king Dīrgha-prajña on earth.

17 O rājā, the younger brother of Vṛṣaparvan, named Ajaka, became king Śālva on earth.

18 The mahā-Daitya Aśvagrīva became king Recamāna on earth.

19 The intelligent and puissant Daitya named Sūkṣma became the famous king Bṛhadratha on earth.

20 The great anti-god Tuhuṇḍa became king Senabindu on earth.

21 The terribly powerful anti-god Iṣupad became the famous monarch Nagnajit.

22 The mahā-anti-god named Ekacakra became Prativindhya on earth.

23 The anti-god named Virūpakṣa, skilled in various techniques of combat, became king Citravarman on earth,

24 The best of anti-gods, heroic Haṛa, became the famous king Subāhu on earth.

25 The powerful foe-smiting anti-god Adhara became king Bāhlika on earth.

26 The best of anti-gods Nicandra, with a face as lovely as the moon, became king Muñjakeśa on earth.

27 The invincible and intelligent anti-god Nikumbha became the great king Devādhipa on earth.

28 The anti-god named Śarabha among Diti's sons became the rāja-ṛṣi Paurava on earth.

29 The anti-god Kupaṭa, most powerful and fortunate, became the famous king Supārśva.

30 The incomparable anti-god Kratha became the rāja-ṛṣi Parvateya, as glorious as a golden mountain.

31 The anti-god known as Śalabha the Second became king Prahlāda of the Bālhīkas.

32 The best of Diti's sons, Candra, enchanting like the moon, became Candravarman, king of the Kāmbojas.

33 The incomparable anti-god Arka become the rāja-ṛṣi Ṛṣika on earth.

34 The mahā-anti-god Mṛtapā became king Paścimānūpaka on earth.

35 The mahā anti-god Gaviṣṭha became king Drumasena on earth.

36 The great and fortunate anti-god Mayūra became king Viśva on earth.

37 The younger brother of Mayūra named Suparṇa became Kālakirti on earth.

38 The enormously strong anti-god Candrahantṛ became the rajarṣi Śunaka on earth.

39 The mahā-anti-god Candravināśana became king Jānaki on earth.

40 The incomparable Daitya named Dīrghajihva became Kāśirāja on earth.

41 Rāhu who was brought forth by Simhikā and who persecuted the sun and moon became the powerful king Kratha on earth.

42 The eldest of Danu's four sons, Vikśara became the mighty king Vasumitra on earth.

43 The second brother of Vikṣara, a mahā-anti-god, became king of Pāṇḍya.

44 The incomparable anti-god Batī became king Pauṇḍramātsyaka on earth.

45 O rājā, the mahā-anti-god Vṛtra became the rājarṣi Maṇimat on earth.

46 The anti-god who was Vṛtra's younger brother called Krodhahantṛ became king Daṇḍa on earth.

47 The anti-god known as Krodhavardhana became king Daṇḍadhāra on earth.

48 All the eight sons of anti-god Kāleya were born on earth in the shapes of tiger-strong kings.

49 The eldest of the Kāleya mahā-anti-gods became Jayatsena, king of Magadha.

50 The second, as powerful as Indra, became king Aparājita on earth.

51 The third, a mahā-antigod, possessing mahā-mayā, became the mahā-energetic king of the Niṣadas.

52 The fourth of the brothers became the remarkable rājarṣī Śreṇimat.

53 The fifth brother, a mahā-anti-god, became king Mahaujas, a foe-smiting monarch.

54 The sixth intelligent and mighty brother became the finest of maharṣis Abhīru.

55 The seventh of the brothers became king Samudrasena, learned in the Śāstras and renowned all over the world from its centre to the sea.

56 The eighth of the Kāleyas, named Bṛhat, became a dharmātmā monarch always engaged in the welfare of all his creatures.

57 The mahā-anti-god named Kukṣi became king Pārvatīya, shining like a golden mountain.

58 The mighty anti-god named Krathana became king Srūyā kṣa on earth.

59 And the handsome anti-god Sūrya became the king of the Bālhīkas, Darada.

60 O rājā, many great monarchs were born from the race of anti-gods called the Krodhavaśa; I shall recite the names of some:

61 Madraka, Karṇaveṣṭa, Siddhārtha, Kīṭaka, Suvīra, Subāhu,

62 Mahāvīra, Bālhīka, Kratha, Vicitra, Suratha, handsome Nīla,

63 Ciravāsas, Bhūmipāla, Dantavakra, Durjaya, Rukmin, Janamejaya,

64 Āṣāḍha, Vāyuvega, Bhūritejas, Ekalavya, Sumitra, Vāṭadhāna,

65 Gomukha, Kārūṣaka, Kṣemadhūrti, Udvaha, Śrutāyus, Bṛhatsena,

66 Kṣema, Ugratīrtha, the king of Kaliṅga, and king Matimat, also known as Īśvara.

67 The powerful, glorious, incomparable, fortune-favoured monarchs were born on earth from the race of anti-gods called the Krodhavaśa.

68 The mahā-anti-god called Kālanemi became on earth Kaṁsa, Ugrasena's son.

69 The anti-god called Devaka, refulgent like rājā-of-the gods Indra himself, became the foremost king of the Gandharvas.

70 Your majesty, Droṇa, the son of Bharadvāja, was not born of woman; he sprang from the celestial ṛṣi Bṛhaspati.

71 He shone like a many-feated hero, and he was the finest of arms-wielders. He was powerful and brilliant.

72 He was wise in the Vedas, and the finest in weapons-craft; all Veda-knowers declared it to be so. He did wonderful deeds; he was the pride of his race.

73 His son, the brave, mahā-powerful, lotus-eyed Aśvatthāman, terror of his foes,

74 Great enemy-smiter, was born on earth from equal portions of Mahādeva-Śiva, Yama, Kāma, and Krodha.

75 Gaṅgā's eight sons were the Vasus, by her husband Śntanu; this was the result of Vasiṣṭha's care and Indra's command.

76 The youngest was Bhīṣma, who dispelled the fears of the Kauravas ; he was intelligent, he knew the Vedas, he was eloquent; he was expert at scattering his enemies.

77 Tremendously powerful and skilled in weapons, he fought with the son of mahā-ātmaned Jamadagni, the great Paraśurāma himself.

78 The ṛṣi known as Kṛpa, embodiment of all the manly virtues, was born in the race of the Rudras.

79 And Śakuni, the mahā-chariot-warrior, excellent foe-smiter, should be considered as a part incarnation of the Dvāpara Yuga.

80 Sātyaki, who preserved the pride of the Vṛṣṇis by chastising his foes, was born of the gods known as the Maruts;

81 And rājarṣi Drupada, finest of arms-wielders, was also born of the same gods, the Maruts.

82 Lord among men Krtavarman, of incomparable heroism, greatest of Kṣatriyas,

83 Excellent foe-smitter, was born also of the Marnts, as was king Virāṭa, the powerful conqueror of kingdoms.

84 The son of Ariṣṭā, Haṁsa, king of the Gandharvas, took birth among the Kauravas.

85 As Dhṛtārāṣṭra, son of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana; he had long arms; he was terribly fiercely; he was a king with prophetic vision.

86 He became blind because of his mother's fault and the ṛṣi's anger. His younger brother was a mahā-powerful mahā personality, Pāṇḍu, who cultivated truth, dharma and purity.

87 And he was called Vidura, most virtuous of virtuous men, was the excellent, fortune-favoured son of Atri.

88 Ill-minded and implacable Duryodhana, destroyer of the good name of the Kuru dynasty, was born as a part incarnation of Kali Yuga.

89 He was the Kali-puruṣa, cause of the massacre of innumerable creatures and he was the ruin of the world.

90 He fanned the mahā-fire of discord. The sons of the rā kṣasa Pulastya became on earth the brothers of Duryodhana.

91 They were a hundred in all – Duḥśāsana, Durmukha, Duḥsaha, and others, not yet named by me.

92 All of them supported Duryodhana. O great Bhārata, they were Pulastya's sons. But Dhṛtārāṣṭra had a hundred and first son also, by a Vaiśyā woman

93 "Shining one," Janamejaya said, "let me have the names of the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra, in the order in which they were born."

94 Vaiśampāyana said:

Duryodhana, Yuyutsu, Duḥśāsana, Duḥśaha, Duḥśala, Durmukha, Viviṃśati, Vikarna,

95 Jalasandha, Sulocana, Vinda, Anuvinda, Durdharṣa, Subā hu, Duṣpradharṣaṇa, Durmarṣaṇa,

96 Drumukha, Duṣkarma, Karṇa, Citra, Upacitra, Citrākṣa, Cāru, Citrāngada,

97 Durmada, Duspraharṣa, Vivitsu, Vikata, Sama, Urṇanā bha, Padmanābha, Nanda,

98 Upanandaka, Senāpati, Suṣena, Kundodara, Citrabāhu, Citravarman, Suvarman,

99 Durvirocana, Ayobāhu, Mahābāhu, Citracāpa, Sukuṇḍala, Bhīmamabala, Balākin, Bhīma, Vikrama,

100 Ugrāyudha, Bhīmaśara, Kanakāyu, Dradhāyudha, Dradhāvarman, Draḍha, Somakīrtī, Anūdasa,

101 Jarāsandha, Dṛḍhasandha, Satyasandha, Sahasravāk, Ugrasravas, Ugraśena, Kṣemamūrti,

102 Aparājita, Paṇḍitaka, Viśālāksa, Durādharna, Dṛḍhahasa, Suhasta, Vātavega, Suvarcas,

103 Ādityaketu, Bhavāsin, Nāgadatta, Anuyāyin, Kavacin, Nisangin, Daṇḍin, Daṇḍadhāra, Dhanurgraha,

104 Ugra, Bhīmaratha, Vīra, Vīrabahu, Alolupa, Abhaya, Raudrakarman,

105 Draḍhartha, Anādṛṣti, Kuṇḍabhedi Kundina, Virāvin, Dirghalocana, Dīrghabāhu, Mahābahu, Vyūḍhoru, Kāngada, Kuṇḍala and Citraka.

106 He also had a daughter; his son, Yuyutsu was born of a Vaiśyā woman, over and above the hundred.

107 O rājā, these are the hundred sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra – and his single daughter. Your majesty now knows their names and the order of their birth.

108 All of them were heroes,
All mahā-chariot-warriors,
All expert in the use of weapons.
All were learned in the Vedas,
Skilled in the art of polity.

109 They were expert in attack and defence,
They were graced with learning.
Their wives were graceful and accomplished,
As suited their natures.

110 When she came of age, the Kaurava monarch took Śakuni's advice and bestowed his daughter Duḥśalā in marriage to rājā, Jayadratha of the Sindhus.

111 Yudhiṣṭhira was a part of Dharma, Bhīma of Marut, and Arjuna of the rājā of the gods;

112 Handsomest of living beings, unparalleled for beauty, Nakula and Sahadeva were projections of the twin Aśvins.

113 The son of Soma, Varcas, became Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son of valiant deeds.

114 Before Varcas took birth on earth, Soma said to the gods, "I cannot part with my son. I love him more than life itself.

115 Let us make a pact – and let us never break it. To destroy the anti-gods is the mission of the gods, so it is our mission also.

116 Let Varcas join the mission, on one condition – that his stay on earth be brief. Nara will be born as Indra's son, and Nārāyaṇa will be his loved-and-loving sakhā-friend.

117 He will be Arjuna, Pāṇḍu's son, on earth. My child will be his son. Even as a boy, he will show excellence as a chariot-warrior.

118 Illustrious gods, let his stay on earth be for sixteen years. In the sixteenth year will take place that fierce battle

119 In which your earth-forms will kill many mighty heroes. In an encounter in which Nara and Nārāyana will not take part,

120 In the encounter of the *cakravyūha*, my son will fight his enemies and push them back.

121 He will pierce the *cakravyūha* formation and roam through it fearlessly. He will humble and kill many mahā-chariot-heroes.

122 My strong-armed son will, in the course of half a day, send a quarter of the enemies' ranks to the land of the king of the dead.

123 Then, when evening falls, the heroes of the chariots will rally and attack him. He will then come back to me.

124 He will have one son, a heroic boy, who will keep alive the dying Bhārata dynasty."

125 The gods heard the words of Soma, and said, "It will be so." They applauded and honoured the lord of the stars, Soma.

126 O rājā, I have given you accounts of the births of your father and his father. The mahā-chariot hero Dhṛṣṭadyumna was born as a part of Agni.

127 Śikhaṇḍin, in previous birth a female, was part of a rākṣasa. The five sons of Draupadī,

128 O best of the Bhāratas, were the gods known as the Viśva-devas. They were Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Śrutakīti,

129 Śatānīka and Śrutasena. Śūra, the finest of Yādavas, became the father of Vasudeva.

130 His daughter was Pṛthā-Kuntī, unrivalled in beauty on earth. Her father promised before Agni that he would give his first-born child.

131 To the son of his paternal aunt, Kuntibhoja, who had no children. He did so, in the hope of getting favours from king Kuntibhoja.

132 Kuntibhoja accepted her as his daugthter, and she looked after the Brahmins and guests who graced her foster-father's palace.

133 One day, it chanced that she had to attend on the fierce, irascible ascetic, rigid-vowed Durvāsas,

134 Who had plumbed the most secret depths of dharma and truth. Her punctilious attendance happened to please the strict-disciplined ṛṣi.

135 Bhāgavan Durvāsas said to her, "Devī, lady of grace, I am pleased with you. I give you a mantra; any god you wish to summon with its power.

136 Will come and his grace will give you children." The girl, out of curiosity, one day.

137 Summoned Arka-Sūrya, the sun-god. She was then still a virgin. The dazzling god of light impregnated her;

138 And the son born to her became an all-weapons expert.

He shone like a god at birth,
This child born with a coat-of-arms
And a pair of divine flesh-ear-rings;

139 Brilliant like the day-maker, the sun,
This child, richly-adorned.
Afraid of friends and relatives, she

140 Floated the baby on the river, where the mahā-illustrious husband of Rādhā,

141 Adhiratha, found him; and the couple adopted him. They named the foundling Vasuṣeṇa, the radiantly wealthy one,

143 He was the best of accomplished men, and deeply learned in the branches of the Vedas. When he was absorbed in *japa*-meditation,

144 There was nothing that he would refuse Brahmins who sought alms, such was this mahā-ātmaned man. One day, Indra, with his son's welfare in mind, disguised as a Brahmin, went.

145 And begged from him his flesh coat-of-arms and shining ear-rings. He sliced his flesh-ear-rings and coat-of-arms from his body,

146 And gave them to Indra. Amazed, Indra handed him a dart, saying, "Whether god, anti-god, gandharva, rākṣasa, nāga, or man. –

147 Whoever you hurl this weapon at, O invincible one – he will die." He was known as Vasuṣeṇa.

148 But later he came to be called Karṇa. Because he sliced his flesh ear-rings and coat-of-armour,

149 He was called Vaikartana, the flesh-slicer. Pṛthā-Kuntī's eldest son grew up in the caste of Sūtas.

150 He became expert in the use of all weapons, and as a friend gave advice and counsel to Duryodhana.

151 He was, O rājā, a wondrous part-projection of the Sun, the day-maker. And Nārāyaṇa, god of gods, everlasting being,

152 Was part-projected on earth as the mighty Vāsudeva-Krishna. Baladeva-Balarāma was a projection of Śeṣa-Nāga.

153 The powerful Pradyumna was a projection of Sanat-kumāra. In this manner many dwellers of heaven were projected as great men on earth,

154 In the race of Vasudeva, adding to its lustre. The apsarās, about whom I have already spoken,

155 Also found projections on earth in accordance with Indra's command. Sixteen thousand of these devis.

156 Became Krishna's wives in the world of men. Śrī-Lakṣmī herself, out of love,

157 Was born in the race of Bhīṣmaka, as the lovely lady Rukmiṇī faultless Rukmiṇī. Draupadī was a part-projection of Śacī.

158 In the race of Drupada, out of the sacred fire.
Neither short, nor tall, she
Had the fragrance of blue lotuses, she

159 Had eyes like lotus-petals, she
Had thighs tapering and fair, her
Hair fell in black waves, her
Body had all the auspicious marks, her
Skin had the shine of emerald.

160 She captivated the hearts of the five lords of men, the Pāṇḍavas. The devīs Siddhi and Dhṛti became the mothers of the five Pāṇḍavas;

161 They were called Kuntī and Mādrī. The goddess Mati became Gāndhāri, the daughter of Subala. O rājā, I have now given you

162 A full account of the various earth-forms assumed by gods, anti-gods, gandharvas, apsarās and rākṣasas. Those who became invincible kings,

163 Those glorious ones born in the race of the Yadus, and those who became Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas have all been described here.

164 This *ādivaṁśāvatarana,* this account of the downcomings of the gods and anti-gods, gives wealth, fame, long life, and children, and success, if listened to attentively.

165 Learned men,
Knowing the descents
Of gods and anti-gods
And gandharvas and rākṣasas,
Are able to pierce
The supreme mystery
Of the world's creation,
Its preservation
And its destruction,
And are not depressed
In the deepest of griefs.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Janamejaya said: "I have heard, O Brahmin, your detailed account of the births of the gods, anti-gods, rākṣasas, gandharvas, and apsarās.

2 What I would now like to hear is the births of the kings of the Kuru race. Let these ṛṣis of the āśrama be informed about them."

3 Vaiśampāyana replied: O friend of the Bhāratas, the founder of the Paurava dynasty was a powerful ruler named Duṣyanta, protector of the earth girdled by the four seas.

4 He enjoyed the entire earth with its four quarters. He was the absolute sovereign of many lands.

5 This mahā-foe-chastiser controlled even the sea-girt lands of the Mlecchas, famed for their mineral wealth.

6 In his reign the castes did not mix. Such prosperity! – there were no tillers of the soil, no toilers in mines, and no wicked men.

7 O best among men, in his reign all were followers of dharma, every deed was motivated by dharma.

8 During his reign, my son,
There were no famines,
No one had fear of thieves,
No one dreaded disease.

9 All the four castes
Performed their sva-dharma
Without hope of reward.
Protected by the king,
The subjects were secure.

10 And Parjanya-Indra showered
Fruitful rains
At fruitful times.
The good earth teemed
With mineral wealth, with animals;

11 Brahmins cherished truth
And performed their allotted duties.

Duṣyanta was a young prince of remarkable talents. His body was like a thunderbolt;

12 He could lift Mandara mountain, with its woods and forests, if he wished, with his two arms. He had mastered all weapons, and specialised in the four kinds of mace-combat: flinging from a distance, fighting at close quarters, whirling around many opponents, hitting with the mace-top.

13 He had mastered riding elephant and horse. He was strong like Viṣṇu, refulgent like Bhāskara-Sūrya.

14 He was ocean-profound, earth-patient. He was adored by his subjects, and he ruled his happy people with the help of dharma.

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 Janamejaya said: "I would like to know in detail the life-story of mahā-minded Bharata and the birth of Śakuntalā.

2 Bhagavan, revered one, tell me in full how this lion-among-men obtained Śakuntalā. Because you know everything and since I ask you, it is proper that you should enlighten me."

3 Vaiśampāyana said : Once upon a time mighty Duṣyanta, accompanied by a retinue of hundreds of horses and elephants, decided to go on a hunt.

4 The retinue consisted of infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots; and soldiers armed with swords, darts, maces, and massive clubs.

5 Surrounded by hundreds of warriors with spears and lances, the king set out on his expedition. The lion-roars of the warriors, the noise of conches and kettledrums,

6 The rattle of the chariot-wheels, the trumpeting of huge elephants, and the clangour of different weapons,

7 Together with the neighing of horses – all these confused, tumultuous sounds blended into a cacophonous, deafening *kill! kill!* when the king marched out.

8 Lovely ladies leaned from balconies of splendid mansions to catch a glimpse of the heroic, illustrious, and handsome king.

9 They saw that he was like Indra, a destroyer of his foes; they felt he was Indra himself, wielder of the thunderbolt.

10 And they showered flowers on his head out of love for him; and he was greatly flattered.

11 Blessed by Brahmins everywhere on the route, the king came to the forest with the intention of hunting deer.

12 Seated on a proud elephant, he looked like a god. The twice-born Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras followed him, pronouncing blessings and crying *Victory*! on all sides.

13 The citizens and others followed the king for some distance.

14 Till he ordered them back. Then he mounted his golden chariot, and the whole earth, including the sky,

15 Reverbrated with the noise of the chariot-wheels. As the learned king entered deeper he thought he had come to the celestial forest Nandana –

16 A forest of wood-apple, *arka,* acacia, *kapittha,* and *dhava* trees, undulating grass, with large boulders loosened from hillsides, lying scattered everywhere.

17 There was no water, and no sign of human habitation; it stretched to many yojanas. Lions, tigers and other fierce beasts roamed in it.

18 His soldiers and servants acted as beaters, and Duṣyanta, best of kings, succeeded in killing many deer.

19 He shot arrows at tigers within fatal range and killed many.

20 Many others he wounded with arrows; those at close range he killed with his sword.

21 The skilful dart-wielder killed many with śakti-darts. Duṣyanta, expert club-fighter, roamed the forest fearlessly.

22 Many were the beasts he killed even as he roamed – some with sword, some with flying dart, some with heavy club.

23 Lions in thousands fled the agitated forest, which trembled at the feats of the astonishingly powerful rājā and his hunt-delighting retinue.

24 The kings of the mahā-forest fled, the other beasts screamed in fear and anxiety, and scattered in all directions.

25 Hungry, thirsty, tired, they stumbled and fell, unable to quench

26 Their thirst in the dry river-beds. Some were devoured raw by the hungry tiger-like tribals;

27 Others were quartered and roasted in specially-lit fires and cooked and eaten.

28 Huge elephants, maddened by the agony of their wounds, ran amuck with their trunks uplifted.

29 Vomiting blood, passing urine and dung in their terrible fear, they trampled many soldiers to death.

30 And in no time, the animal-filled forest was rid of its lions, tigers, and other beasts by the rājā and his cloud-like bands of soldiers.

SECTION SEVENTY

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: The rājā and his followers killed thousands of animals and proceeded to another forest to hunt there.

2 Tired and hungry, accompanied by one follower alone, he came to a tree-less patch of scrub-land at the far end of the forest.

3 He crossed this dry region, and came on a forest filled with āśramas.

Lovely to the eyes,
Soothing to the heart,

4 Cool breezes blowing,
Full of flowering trees,
Soft green grass everywhere,

5 Echoing with birdsong,
Trills of male kokilas,
And the shrill cicadas;

6 Canopy of big-branched trees,
Bees humming round creepers,
Fragrant bowers everywhere;

7 No trees without fruits,
No shrubs with thorns,
No plants without bees;

8 Replete with singing birds,
Perennial-flowering,
Soothing under-tree shadows –

9 Such an enchanting forest
Did king Duṣyanta enter.
Waving flowering trees

10 Showered clusters
Of fragrant blossoms
Of the king's head;

11 Rainbow-flowered trees,
Birds on their bowed branches,
And the tempted bees humming

12 For honey in sweet chorus
In the creeper-covered bowers.
The king was entranced.

13 Clasping one another,
The flower-filled trees
Looked like rainbows entangled.

14 Siddhas and Cāraṇas,
Gandharvas, apsarās, kinnaras,
And vanara forest-folk delighted there

15 Drugged with flower-scent,
Cool breezes blew,
As if flirting with the trees.

16 He saw the lovely forest trees
Beside a river delta,
Standing like huge tall flagpoles.

17 He saw in the forest,
The happy-birded forest,
A heart-charming āśrama,

18 Surrounded by trees,
And sacred fires burning.
He offered pūjā to the āśrama.

19 He saw ascetics: yatis and vālakhilas and munis;
Many rooms adjoined the fires;
The ground was a carpet of flowers.

20 O rājā! Tall trees with large trunks
Made the spot beautiful.
The river Mālinī flowed nearby.

21 Waterfowl in the river
Pleased the ṛṣis; the king saw
Deer-cubs sporting on her banks.

22 The illustrious king whose chariot no power on earth could obstruct entered the āśrama. It was lovely wherever one looked; it was like heaven.

23 He noticed that the āśrama was situated right on the river bank, on the bank of the sacred river, which was like a mother flowing beside it.

24 Milk-white were the waves
On her breast; cakravākas
Played on her banks; kinnaras
Lived peacefully there, and bears and vānaras.

25 Sounds of the chanted Vedas
Wafted over the river
Frequented
by snakes, tigers, and mouth elephants.

26 On her banks too was mahā-ātmaned
Kaśyapa's āśrama, where lived
Many mahā ṛṣis.

27 He saw the river,
He saw the āśrama,
And he had to enter.

28 The river Mālinī was dotted with
Islands with seductive shores;
It was like Nara-Nārāyaṇa's
Gaṅgā-washed abode.

29 He set foot in the āśrama,
and he heard:
the cry of wild peacocks as if
in the garden of Citraratha.

30 He entered:
because he wanted to meet
Kaṇva, mahā-ṛṣi of Kaśyapa's race,
Kaṇva, all-virtue-possessor,
in that āśrama so dazzling to behold.

31 He ordered the flag-bearers, foot-soldiers, horsemen, and elephant-riders to halt on the outskirts of the forest, and said:

32 "I go to meet the illustrious ṛṣi of Kaśyapa's race, the without-darkness-one. Stay here till I return."

33 The rājā forgot his hunger and thirst when he entered, so sublime was the sight of that infinite-pleasured garden, like Nandana itself.

34 He laid aside all the trappings and signs of his kingship, and entered, accompanied by his minister and purohita

35 Because a great desire had risen in him to see the ṛṣi of indestructible tapasyā.

36 The āśrama looked like the realm of Brahmā.
Bees hummed, and birds sang.
In one corner, the twice-born
Chanted the Ṛg-Veda
With the proper intonation;

37 In another, Vedāṅga-knowing
Brahmins chanted from the Yajur;
In a third, rigid-vowed ṛṣis
Sang the Sāma melodiously;

38 In a fourth, he saw Brahmins
Reciting from the Atharva
With the proper intonation;

39 And in various other places,
Brahmins skilled in word-wisdom
Recited the sacred texts.

40 The sacred āśrama,
Filled with holy syllables,
Was like Brahmā's own abode.

41 Brahmins expert in yajña,
Yajña-rituals, and *krama*-recitation
Lived there; others too, skilled
In Nyāya, mental sciences, and the Vedas.

42 And some there were, learned
In the science of semantics,
Some expert in special rituals,
Some in mokṣa-dharma.

43 Some knew the arts of debate,
How to draw right conclusions,
Reject superfluities; some skilled
In etymology, prosody, astrology.

44 Some knew the properties of matter,
Others the fruits of yajña, others
The relation of cause and effect,
Other bird and vānara language;

45 Others the comprehensive texts. The king
Heard them chanting and reciting,
With captivating excellence.

46 Duṣyanta, slayer-of-foes,
Saw all around him Brahmins
Engaged in homa and japa ceremonies.

47 He was astonished when he saw
The exquisite carpet brought
For him to sit on.

48 Seeing all the rituals for the pūjā
Of the gods he wondered:
Am I in Brahmā's realm?

49 The more he saw –
Of Kaśyapa's holy āśrama,
Its graces and virtues –
The more he wanted to see.

50 Impelled by curiosity
To see the entire āśrama of mahā-vowed ṛṣis,
He went further in; accompanied
By his minister and priest.

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Proceeding still further, the mahā-powerful king left his minister and priest behind; but he was unable to find the strict-vowed ṛṣi.

2 Seeing no sign of human life, he shouted, "Is anyone there?" The words echoed in the forest.

3 A girl in hermit bark-dress,
Lovely as Śrī-Lakṣmī,
Emerged from the ṛṣi's hut.

4 She saw rājā Duṣyanta.
The black-eyed girl offered him pūjā-respect
And sweetly welcomed him in.

5 She was strict-vowed.
Young.
Exquisite-figured.
Soft-speaking.
Gracious.
Deserving of pūjā-respect

6 O Janamejaya!
He was broad-chested.
Powerfully built.
Long-armed.
Leonine-shouldered
Graced with auspicious marks.

7 She offered him a seat,
Water to wash his feet
In the ritual of *arghya*;
Enquired after his health.

8 She honoured him and,
After the necessary courtesies,
Asked, 'What can I do for you?
Who are you?
What do you desire
In the sacred āśrama
Of our maharṣi?"

9 Offered pūjā-respect by her, the rājā
Said to the soft-voiced,
Faultless-featured girl,
"Lotus-eye girl,
I am the son
Of rājarṣi Ilila,
A mahā-ātmaned sage.
My name is Duṣyanta.
I speak the truth.

10 My purpose, lovely lady, is
To pay homage to ṛṣi Kaṇva;
Where is the mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣi?"

11 Śakuntalā said:
"My father is away,
To collect fruits for the āśrama.
If you would care to wait,
He will be back soon."

12 The king (Vaiśampāyana continued)
Did not see any ṛṣi near.
He heard her talk to him.
He saw she was lovely, sweet-smiling,
She was enchanting.

13 Her youth,
Her simplicity, her humility, and
Her dignity were her wondrous beauty.

14 He asked:
“Who are you?
Whose daughter, lovely lady?
Why are you here, in this forest?
O lovely one, accomplished one,
From where have you come?

14 Sweet-smiling one,
You stole my heart with your first glance.
Tell me more about yourself,
Lovely lady, tell me all.

15 Lady with tapering thighs
like an elephant’s trunk!
Intoxicatingly lovely lady! Listen to me.

16 I am rājā Duṣyanta of the dynasty
of the rājarṣi Puru.
I accept you today as my bride.
I will accept none but a Kṣatriya girl.

17 No ṛṣi’s daughter,
No girl of any other caste,
Nor anyone else’s wife.

18 Sweet-speaking lady!
Keep in mind this – I’m in full control.
I know my own mind.
And yet, I am drawn towards you.

19 You must be a Kṣatriya.
Lovely one,
Tell me who you are!
I cannot be attracted to a Brahmin girl.

20 O large-eyed beauty!
I adore you.
I am your devoted bhaktā.
Make me yours.
Enjoy my kingdom.
Think of nothing else.
Do not refuse me.”

21 She smiled, and said sweetly,
"I am the daughter of Kaṇva,
Who is wise in dharma,
A mahātmā ascetic.

22 O Indra-among-rājās,
I am not free.
Kaṇva is my guru, my father.
Ask him.
Do nothing improper."

23 Duṣyanta said "Fortune-favoured lady,
"Kaṇva is a great ṛṣi.
The entire world offers him pūjā-respect.
He has sublimited his sexual passions.
Dharma itself may stray, but not he.

24 How is it, O lovely one,
That you are *his* daughter?
This I would like to know from you.
Remove my doubt."
Śakuntala replied:
"O rājā, all I know is that I have been told –
About what happened,
How I became his daughter.

25 Who says one thing to himself,
And something else to good people –
Who's wrong to himself
And right to others –
Such a person
Is not only
A hypocrite
But also a fool.

26 A long time ago, a ṛṣi
Came here and enquired about my birth.
'You are a sex-sublimated ṛṣi
How is Śakuntalā
Your daughter?
Tell me the truth, O Kaṇva.

27 This is what the maharṣi replied:
In the distant past Viśvāmitra
Practised such mahā-tapasyā
That Śakra-Indra, king of gods, frightened, said:

28 'Menakā, excelling-in-divine-guṇas,
Loveliest of apsarās,
Gracious apsarā,
Help me.

29 The maharṣi Viśvāmitra
Sun-refulgent ascetic,
Is practising mahā-tapasyā,
I am afraid.

30 Menakā,
Slim-waisted apsarā,
Do this for me:
Go to Viśvāmitra, who is
Deep in meditation and penance.

31 He has the power to dethrone me.
Go to him.
Tempt him,
Frustrate his tapasyā.

32 O lovely thighed apsara,
Use your beauty, youth,
Your charm, your skill, smile, and speech,
And frustrate his tapasyā.'

33 Menakā replied:
"Bhagavān Viśvāmitra
Has mahā-energy and mahā-tapasyā.
You know this, Bhagavān Indra.
You have heard of his wrath.

34 His power, tapasyā, and wrath
Have made even you fearful.
And I am only a simple apsarā.

35 He was responsible for Vasiṣṭha's
Premature grief over the deaths of his sons.
He was born a Kṣatriya
And became a Brahmin by merit.

36 He created a whole river
For the sake of his ablutions;
They call it the Kauśiki.

37 There his wife was looked after by the dharmātmā
Rājarṣi Mataṅga during the famine;
Mataṅga was then living as a hunter.

38 When the famine ended,
Viśvāmitra returned and named the river
Pārā.

39 Out of gratitude to Mataṇga, he
Became his priest; you, lord of the gods,
In fear went to his yajña to drink soma.

40 The great ṛṣi Viśvāmitra, furious,
Once created another universe of stars,
Beginning with Śravaṇa.
He sheltered the guru-cursed Triśaṅku.

41 I am afraid.
I am afraid to approach a man
So powerful in deeds.
Give me assurance, my lord,
That he will not burn me in anger.

42 His righteous anger can consume the worlds.
His kick can make the earth totter.
He can uproot the mahā-mountain Meru, and hurl it far.
He can cover the ten points of the universe
in an instant.

43 How can a girl like me
Tempt a man like him –
So full of dedication, burning
Like a disciplined flame, always
In control of his senses?

44 O hord of the gods!
His mouth is aflame!
The pupils of his eyes
are the sun and the moon!
His tongue
is like Kāla, god of death!
What can a girl like me do?

45 Yama, Soma, maharṣis,
Sādhyas, Viśvas, Vālakhilas, –
All tremble at the thought of his power.
Why should I not fear him?

46 Because you command me, O lord of the gods,
Surendra-Indra, I will go.
But give me some means to protect myself,
Even as I tempt him.

47 Ask the wind god Māruta to be present,
to remove my dress
when I tempt him with kāma.
Ask the god of love Manmatha
to obey your instructions
and help me in my mission.

48 Ask the wind to carry fragrance from the forest
to seduce the ṛṣi.'
She finished; and, provided as desired,
she came to Viśvāmitra's āsrama.

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 Śakra-Indra ordered the wind god Vāyu
(Kaṇva went on)
to be present when Menakā
appeared before the ṛṣi.

2 The shy, lovely-thighed apsarā
entered the āśrama,
and stood before Viśvāmitra,
defect-purified ascetic,
strict-penanced ṛṣi.

3 She greeted him, and
danced in front of him;
then, suddenly, the wind god Māruta
lifted her moon-white dress.

4 Smiling embarrassedly, she
ran after it, pretending
to be angry with
the conduct of the wind god.

5 All this happened
before the sun-dazzling-ṛṣi's eyes;
he saw her, naked,
the ravishing apsarā.

6 She was lovely, he
saw her lovely, there
was not one mark of age
on her naked skin.

7 He saw her beauty,
Kāma stirred in him,
the best of ṛṣis
longed to be with her.

8 He asked her to come
near him; the blameless girl accepted;
many days they passed
enjoying each other.

9 Many years went by
seeming but a day
to the lovers. Unable to control kāma
unable to control anger,
the muni Viśvāmitra
fell from his profound tapasyā.

10 Delusion confused the muni.
Menakā became one
with the muni overpowered
by kāma and rāga.
and she conceived Śakuntalā.

11 Menakā went to the Mālinī
rippling through Himavat valley;
there her daughter was born;
there abandoned by her.

12 Successful in her mission,
she returned to Śakra-Indra's abode.
Meanwhile, śakunta-birds
spotted the baby

13 In the forest of lions
and tigers, and circled her,
protecting her; that
no beasts of prey harm her,

14 The śakuntas surrounded
Menakā's child; I went there
for my ablutions one day,
saw the child lying,

15 Alone in the forest,
surrounded by śakuntas.
I brought her here,
and made her my daughter.

16 The dharma-śāstras say:
There are three fathers –
maker of body, protector of life,
and giver of food.

17 Because I found her alone,
protected by birds known
as *śakuntas,* I named her
Śakuntalā.

18 This, O Brahmin, is how
Śakuntalā became my daughter.
And faultless Śakuntalā too
treats me as her father."

19 Śakuntalā added:
"That, O rājā, is what my father
said to the maharṣi about me.
Now you know how I am
the daughter of Kaṇva.

20 I do not know my real father.
My father is Kaṇva.
O rājā, I have told you all
I know about my birth."

SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 Duṣyanta said:
"Gracious lady, you speak like a princess,
how beautifully you speak!
Lovely-thighed lady, be my wife.
Tell me what I may do for you.

2 I shall get for you, today,
golden earrings, garlands, gems,
robes, pearls, coins, carpets, my kingdom!
Lady of loveliness, be my wife.

3 Marry me, beautiful one,
shy one, tapering-thighed one,
according to gāndharva rites;
that marriage, they say, is the best."

4 Śakuntalā replied:
"O rājā, my father is away;
he has gone to bring fruits.
Wait till he returns to the āśrama.
He will bestow me to you."

5 Dusyanta said:
"O lovely-thighed lady, faultless one,
accept me on your own.
I give you all of myself,
I give you all my heart.

6 What better friend than oneself?
What better help than oneself?
What better father than oneself?
According to dharma,
you are free to choose.

7 Dharma lays down
eight kinds of marriage:
brāhmya, daiva, ārṣa,
prājāpatya, āsura,

8 Gāndharva, rākṣasa,
and paiśāca. Brahmā's
self-born son Manu describes
them in that order.

9 Faultless lady, the first four
are recommended for Brahmins;
and dharma recommends the first six
for Kṣatriyas;

10 For rājās, even the rākṣasa
is permitted; the āsura
is for Vaiśyas and Śūdras. Of the last five,
the first three are dharma, the next two adharma.

11 The paiśāca and āsura
should never be practised.
That's what dharma says –
and a man should abide by dharma.

12 Gāndharva and rākṣasa are for Kṣatriyas,
so do not fear; single,
or as a mixture of both,
our marriage will be valid.

13 Lovely lady, I am overcome by kāma.
So are you.
Be my wife,
by gāndharva rites."

14 Śakuntalā said:
"Noble Paurava, if that is indeed
the path of dharma,
if I can choose for myself,
then promise me this, my lord.

15 Promise you will give what I ask for
here, from you, now, in secret,
in this secluded place –
The son that is born to me

16 Must inherit the crown, O maharājā.
This is my condition. I have spoken the truth.
I have decided. If you agree, Duṣyanta,
let us make love."

17 Vaiśampāyaṇa continued:
The rājā, without thinking twice,
agreed. "Sweet-smiling lady,"
he said, "I give you my word.
I will take you to my capital.

18 I promise to do as you say.
You deserve it, O lovely thighed one.
I am speaking the truth."
With these words, rājarṣi Duṣyanta

19 Married blameless Śakuntalā,
according to the ritual.
He returned to his capital,
repeatedly assuring her,

20 *I will send my army,*
all four kinds of soldiers,
to escort you to my capital,
O sweet-smiling lady.

21 The graceful-gaited Śakuntalā
Was embraced
By rājarṣi Duṣyanta
She looked up, smiling gently.

22 Devī Śakuntalā half-circled in pradakṣiṇā
Respectfully around the rājā
There were tears in her eyes.
She touched his feet.

23 The king repeatedly said:
"Devī,
do not worry.
I have taken a holy vow:
I will send for you."

24 With this pledge, O Janamejaya,
he went away.
On his way back,
he began to think of Kaṇva.

25 *What will he say,*
when he gets to know it all?
This was uppermost in his mind
all the way to his capital.

26 Hardly had he left the āśrama
than Kaṇva arrived.
But Śakuntalā, ashamed,
did not immediately come out to greet him.

27 Slowly she came near him.
She placed a seat before him.
She was so embarrassed
She did not say a word.
She was afraid

28 She had fallen from her sva-dharma.
She was a brahmacāriṇī,
Now no more a virgin.
Kaṇva noticed her embarassment
and said:

29 "My child!
May your graceful shyness
be with you always.
Lovely-thighed child,
do not fear.
Tell me all."

30 Sweet smiling, shy,
Śrīmatī Śakuntalā
said slowly to Kaṇva:
"Rājā Duṣyanta, son of Ilila,
came unannounced to this āṣrama.
I accepted him as my husband.

31 The rest you can know
by your divine insight.
Grant that the Kṣatiya race
is saved from your wrath."

32 With his intuitive wisdom,
the ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā guessed the truth.
His spiritual eye showed him all,
and he was pleased.

33 "My child, your love-making in secret today,
without my permission,
has fortunately
not violated your dharma.

34 A gāndharva marriage
between two who love each other,
though without mantras,
is considered best for a Ksatriya.

35 Dusyanta is puruṣottama best-among-men,
a dharmātmā, a mahātmā.
Such is the person
you have taken for husband.

36 Your son will be mahā-powerful,
he will be a mahātmā; his dominion
will extend over the entire earth,
over even the ocean.

37 Your son will be a cakravartin,
a world-emperor.
When he marches against foes,
they will scatter in fear."

38 Śakuntalā came near, and
washed her tired father's feet.
She removed the load from his shoulders,
arranged the fruits properly,

39 And said: "Revered one, bhagavan,
bless my husband,
Puruṣottama rājā Duṣyanta,
and his council of ministers."

40 "My lovely child," said Kaṇva,
"I will bless him for your sake.
Sweet-smiling girl,
till now, your fertile periods
have been fruitless.
Faultless one,
today has been fruitful.
sweet-smiling girl,
Sweet girl, blameless one,
ask any boon you like."

41 Śakuntalā, moved by desire
for her husband's welfare,
asked that the Pauravas stay firm in dharma
and never deprived of their thrones.

42 Kaṇva, the ṛṣi who was
the finest of all firm-in-dharma,
said, "It will be so."
He placed both his hands
on the Śri-lovely Śakuntalā,
and said:

43 "Devī!
From today you are the queen
of mahā-ātmaned Duṣyanta.
Behave from today
as a wife is expected to behave."

44 Promising Śakuntālā,
Duṣyanta left.
Sakuntalā's womb grew large
with the baby-prince
of mahā-ātmaned Duṣyanta.

45 She attended to her duties,
But her mind was always
On rājā Duṣyanta.
She passed sleepless days and nights.
She forgot to bathe.
She forgot to eat.

46 She was convinced that
The fourfold army escort
Would come today,
Tomorrow, or the day after.

47 Days, weeks, months, seasons, years
Passed. Three years passed.

SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Three years after Duṣyanta left the āśrama,
making his promises to Sakuntalā,
she gave birth to a boy of superhuman abilities.

2 He shone like a blazing fire.
O Janamejaya, he had beauty,
and magnanimity, and every accomplishment.
Flowers showered from the sky.
The gods played dundhubi drums. Apsaras danced

3 And sang sweet songs.
Leading the gods,
Śakra-Indra said:
"Śakuntalā, your son
Will be a cakravartion emperor.

4 None will equal him in strength, energy, and beauty.
He will perform a hundred aśvamedha yajñas.
He will offer countless dakṣiṇās.
At hundreds of rājasūya yajñas."

5 The ṛṣis of Kaṇva's āśrama
Heard the gods praise Śakuntalā,
And added their praise and blessings.

6 Kaṇva, best of holy men,
performed all the boy's birth-saṁskāras
as enjoined in the śāstras.
The boy grew in glory daily.

7 He had pearly, strong teeth,
broad forehead, auspicious marks on palms,
could kill a lion bare-handed;
he grew up like a god's son.

8 At the age of six, he could seize and tie tigers,
boars, buffaloes and elephants
to the trees of the āśrama.

9 He rode some, seized others;
and played games with them.
The hermits of the āśrama
called him Sarvadamana, the All-Tamer.

10 And that became his name – Sarvadamana –
for he had great strength, energy and prowess.

11 Ṛṣi Kaṇva saw his feats, and advised Śakuntalā
that the time had come for him to be heir-apparent.

12 He said to his disciples,
"Take Śakuntalā and her son
to the house of her husband.
She is blessed with all the auspicious marks.

13 It is not right for a woman to stay long with paternal
or maternal relatives; it harms her good name,
her characters, her dharma.
Take her to her husband."

14 The mahā-illustrious disciples of Kaṇva
promised, "We will do so,"
and took Śakuntalā and her son
to the city of Hastināpura.

15 The lovely-eye-browed beauty and her lotus-eyed
son left the āśrama where she had first met
Duṣyanta.

16 She sent word ahead of her
before entering the royal court.
Her son shone like the morning sun.
They introduced her to the king.

17 The disciples of the ṛṣi explained everything
to him, and returned to the āśrama.
She greeted him and said:

18 "This is your son, O finest of men,
your god-like child by me.
Make him the heir-apparent,
even as you once promised.

19 Recall, O Puruṣottama, best-among-men,
the agreement you made with me
when we two made love in the āśrama of Kaṇva."

20 The rājā heard her.
He remembered all. He said,
"I remember nothing.
Wicked hermit-girl, who are you?

21 I cannot recall ever
having anything to do with you
regarding dharma, artha or kāma.
Go! – or stay; as you please."

22 When she heard this,
shame engulfed the lovely-limbed girl,
she felt faint;
she stood petrified, like a pole.

23 Then her eyes flamed, like copper,
her lips trembled;
she cast glances at the rājā
as if to consume him.

24 But with the power of her tapasyā
she checked herself,
subdued her flaming anger,
suppressed her conscience.

25 She collected herself,
looked straight at her husband,
sadly and with deep feeling she said to him :

26 "Maharājā, how can you, how can you,
knowing everything, say,
like a petty person,
I know nothing?

27 Your heart is the witness
if I lie or speak truth.
O speak the truth,
do not demean yourself.

28 He deceives himself
who is one thing to himself
and another to others.
No wickedness is beyond such a man.

29 You think only *you* know
what you know. But no –
One in your heart knows too.
That one has witnessed your misdeed.

30 It is not dharma that suffers.
The man who lies, suffers;
the truth-speaker is praised
as the well-wisher of dharma.

31 Man, when he does wrong,
may think no one sees him.
But the gods see him.
The Divinity in his heart sees him.

32 Sun, moon, air, fire,
earth, sky, water see him;
Yama, day, night, twilight
and Dharma see him.

33 If the Divinity in his heart, the all-karma witness,
is pleased, Yama is helpless.
Yama, son of Vivasvat,
cannot touch such a man.

34 If the Divinity in his heart
is not pleased, Yama is happy;
and Yama will punish that man
for all his wicked deeds.

35 Nor do the gods bless a man
who has two faces
and so degrades himself.
His own ātman does not bless him.

36 I come as a faithful wife,
on my own. Do not spurn me.
I am your wife.
I deserve respect. Yet you spurn me.

37 Because I have come on my own,
am I someone to be insulted?
Is my voice a voice in the desert?
Hear me, Duṣyanta! Why don't you listen?

38 If you refuse me,
Duṣyanta,
your head will shatter today
into a thousand pieces!

39 Wise men learned in the Purāṇas say
When a husband enters his wife's womb,
he comes out as a son.
A wife is Jāyā: she-from-whom-one-is-born.

40 Born to a wise man,
a son is responsible
for the liberation of the spirits
of his deceased ancestors, the pitṛs.

41 Therefore, his is called *putra,*
by self-born Brahmā himself,
for he frees his ancestors
from the hell
called *put*.

42 With the birth of a son,
a man conquers the three worlds; with a grandson,
enjoys eternity; with a grandson's son,
he finds everlasting bliss.

43 She is a true wife
who is skilled in household duties;
she is a true wife
who bears children;
she is a true wife
whose heart is given to her husband;
she is a true wife
who knows no man but her husband.

44 A wife
is a man's half;
A wife
is a man's sakhī, his loved-and-loving friend;
A wife is the threefold root:
Dharma, Artha, and Kāma;
A wife
is one who ferries the husband across.

45 With a wife
one performs religious rites;
A wife
brings domestic happiness;
A wife
is a means to joy;
A wife
brings good fortune.

46 A sweet-speaking wife
is a companion in happy times;
A wife
is like a mother in illness and sorrow.

47 To a husband
travelling abroad
a wife
is a precious companion;
The man
who has a wife
is trusted
by all;
The wife
is a means
to a man's
salvation.

48 In this world
or in the land of Yama,
leaving this world,
it is the devoted wife
who faithfully
follows him everywhere.

49 And if she dies
before her husband,
she waits for him;
if he die first,
the chaste wife
follows him.

50 For all these reasons,
O rājā,
marriage exists.
The husband has his wife
in this world
and the next.

51 Wise men have said:
a man himself
is born as his son;
so a wife who has a son
should be treated
as one's mother.

52 Looking at his son,
a man sees himself
as in a mirror;
He feels happy,
like a good man
attaining heaven.

53 In mental distress, in illness,
to look at one's wife
is to be healed,
just as a perspiring man
is refreshed
after a cool bath.

54 No man,
not even in anger,
should displease his wife;
Happiness, joy, dharma,
everything
depends on her

55 She is the hallowed soil
in which he is born
a second time;
Even ṛṣis
cannot create men
without women.

56 Is any happiness greater
than what a father feels
when his small son,
though grubby and dusty,
runs towards him
to be clasped in his arms?

57 Why do you treat this child,
your son,
so coldly?
See how he looks at you,
wistfully
again and again!

58 Even insignificant ants
lovingly
care for their eggs;
And you, so learned,
shouldn't you
care for your own?

59 Crows are known
to hatch kokila's eggs
as their own;
And you, so learned,
shouldn't you
support your own child?

60 The touch of sandalpaste,
of women,
of water,
is not half as pleasing
as the embrace
of one's own son.

61 A Brahmin is best among bipeds,
A cow best among quadrupeds,
A guru best among superiors,
A son best of everything pleasing to the touch.

62 Let this lovely boy
touch you,
embrace you.
There is nothing in this world
more pleasing
than a son's embrace.

63 O Indra-among-rājās,
great foe-chastiser,
I gave birth to this boy,
dispeller of your sorrows,
after the completion
of three years.

64 O great Paurava,
as I lay
in the birth-room,
I heard a voice in the sky
say: *He will perform*
a hundred aśvamedhas.

65 Far away from home,
a man picks up
another man's son,
smells his head
and feels his being
fill with happiness.

66 And at a baby's
jātakarma birth-ceremony,
your majesty knows,
Brahmins chant these mantras
from the Vedas
as part of the ceremony:

67 *Flesh of my flesh*
Heart of my heart
My own son
may you live a hundred years.

68 *Life of my life*
Life of my race
Be happy my son
May you live a hundred years.

69 This boy
    is flesh of your flesh,
        being of your being,
Like your image in a lake
    you see before you
        a part of yourself.

70 Just as the fire of the yajña
    is lit from the fire
        of the hearth,
this son has come from you.
    You were one,
        now you are two.

71 You were on a deer-hunt, O rājā,
when you met me, a virgin,
in the āśrama of my father.

72 Urvaśī, Pūrvacitti, Sahajanyā, Menakā,
Viśvācī and Ghṛtācī are six lovely apsarās.

73 Menakā, born of Brahmā,
Is the loveliest. Coming from heaven,
She gave me birth on earth
From her union with Viśvāmitra.

74 I was born in a Himavant valley.
She had no feelings; she left me
Alone, there, as if I was someone else's child.

75 What inauspicious karma did I do in a previous life
To be abandoned in this way by my parents?
What have I done now to be abandoned by you?

76 If you reject me,
    I will return to the āśrama;
But do not reject this boy,
    your own son."

77 Dusyanta replied:
    "I do not know, Śakuntalā,
        whose child this is.
    Women often tell lies.
        Who will trust your words?

78 Your mother, amorous Menakā,
    has no feelings:
she abandoned you in Himavant,
    like a faded garland.

79 Your father, lustful Viśvāmitra,
    aspired to be a Brahmin;
he is the man
    who was tempted and who succumbed.

80 But Menakā is best of apsarās
    to you, Viśvāmitra best of maharṣis.
You speak like a whore,
    because your are their daughter.

81 Your words are valueless, undeserving of śraddhā.
    Go away!
Are you not ashamed to speak like this
    before me? – Go!

82 How can you three be related –
    Menakā, the apsarā,
the excellent ṛṣi Viśvāmitra,
    and you, a wretch in hermit-dress?

83 Your son is grown up.
    He looks strong.
So soon – and so strong –
    like a śāla-tree?

84 You were born low,
  you speak like a low woman.
You were born from the lust
  of Menakā.

85 Leave me, hermit girl!
  Go!
All that you say
  has nothing to do with me."

86 Śakuntalā said:
  "Others' faults, small as mustard seeds,
    you see, O rājā–
  but not your own,
    big as the fruit of the *bilva.*

87 Menakā is a goddess,
  best among goddesses.
My birth, Duṣyanta,
  is nobler than yours.

88 You walk on earth, O Indra-among-rājās!
  I roam the sky.
You are a mustard seed,
  I the mountain Meru.

89 Look!
  I can go, if I please,
to the abodes of Indra,
  Kubera, Yama, and Varuṇa.

90 O defectless one!
  Let me cite a proverb,
well-meant, not ill-meant.
  (Forgive my audacity.)

91 The ugly man
  thinks himself more handsome
than others –
  till he looks in a mirror.

92 When he sees himself
in the undeceiving mirror,
he knows the difference
between him and others.

93 The good looking man
does not need to mock others;
the man who mocks others
really mocks himself.

94 A pig delights in filth
even in a flower-garden;
a wicked man finds evil
even where there's good.

95 But like the Himālayan haṁsa-swan
that sifts milk from water,
a wise man takes only good
out of good-and-evil mixed.

96 It pains the good man
to speak ill of others;
it delights the evil man
always to speak ill.

97 It delights the good man
to be respectful to elders:
it delights the fool
to do otherwise.

98 Good men shun fault-finding,
fools revel in it;
Evil men speak ill of good men,
good men return good for evil.

99 What can be more sad
in this world than this –
that men who are wicked
should brand good men as wicked?

100 Even atheists fear those
who hate truth and dharma.
as men fear poisonous snakes.
– And I, a believer?

101 The man who neglects
his own son, is doomed.
The gods take away his wealth,
his good fortune is destroyed.

102 The pitṛs say: A son
continues the family line.
A son's birth is the highest of all dharmas.
A son should never be neglected.

103 Manu says: Dharma lays down five sons –
a wife's, a son gifted,
a son bought, a son reared,
an illegitimate son.

104 Sons sustain dharma;
sons increase joy;
sons rescue one's pitṛs
from the hell called *put*.

105 O lion among kings!
Do not abandon your son.
By cherishing him,
you cherish your own self.

106 Be honest, my lord – a pond
is better than a hundred wells,
a yajña better than a pond, a son still better,
truth better than a hundred sons.

107 Weigh a hundred aśvamedhas
and truth.
Truth will tilt heavier
than a hundred horse-sacrifices.

108 Listen to me, O rājā!
Truth equals the study
of all the Vedas,
of all pilgrimages put together.

109 There is no dharma like truth,
nothing higher than truth.
Nor is there anything more immoral
than falsehood.

110 Truth is the lord Brahmā,
Truth the Supreme Law.
Do not break your word, O rājā!
Let truth and you be one.

111 If you and falsehood unite,
if you disbelieve me,
I will go, now, by myself.
I do not want you.

112 But when you die, Duṣyanta,
my son will rule the earth
surrounded by the four seas
and adorned with the king of mountains."

113 Vaiśampāyana continued:
She said this, and turned away.
A disembodied voice
declared to Duṣyanta, seated
beside his ministers, purohitas and ṛtviks:

114 "A mother,
Duṣyanta,
Is flesh-sheath;
By whom
Is born
A father's son.
Acknowledge
Your son.
Honour her.

115 Duṣyanta,
According to dharma,
Purer than a woman
Is nothing.
Every month a woman
Is cleansed of impuritics
By her period.

116 One's own son
is one's own saviour
from death. She is right:
you are this boy's father.

117 A husband's body breaks
in two: one himself, one son
in wife-womb. Acknowledge him:
as your son, born of Śakuntalā.

118 To abandon one's son
and live, is a crime.
O Paurava, acknowledge him:
as your son, born of Śakuntalā.

119 Because you cherish this child
on the strength of our word,
the world will know him as Bharata,
the Cherished One."

120 He heard these words of the gods,
and he was pleased.
He turned to his ministers and purohitas,
and said:

121 "You have heard the words
of the message of the gods.
I always knew
this boy was my son.

122 Had I acknowledged him
at Śakuntalā's words,
my subjects would have suspected me,
my son would not have been thought pure."

123 Vaiśampāyana said:
O great Bharata Janamejaya, the rājā
was pleased that the message of the gods
had clearly established
the purity of his son.

124 Joyfully the rājā performed
all the rites
that a father performs
for his son.

125 He smelt his son's head,
he lovingly embraced him.
The Brahmins blessed him,
the poets glorified him.

126 The pleasure of a son's touch
was now his; he acknowledged
Śakuntalā with honour and affection,
lovingly pacified her:

127 Devī, I married you
in secret. No one knew.
My people would have suspected you.
They joined in lust,

128 *Not as husband and wife.*
Our son would have been rejected.
That's what I was thinking of –
how to make him accepted.

129 *Priye!* My dearest, lovely-eyed one, Viśālākṣī,
I forgive you and
all that you spoke in anger,
because I know you love me."

130 He said this to his queen,
and presented her
gifts of perfume,
choice food and drink,

131 And installed his son
as heir-apparent,
and gave him the name
Bharata.

132 From that day Bharata's chariot,
like god's chariot,
dazzling-wheeled, filled
the earth with noise.

133 Bharata subdued
all the kings of the world.
He ruled nobly,
he became greatly famous.

134 They called him Cakravartin
and Sarvadamana.
He performed many sacrifices,
like Indra, lord of the Maruts.

135 Kaṇva presided at these yajñas.
Offerings were made to Brahmins.
The fortune-favoured king
performed the cow and horse sacrifices.

136 Bharata gave one thousand gold coins
as Kaṇva's dakṣiṇā.
He is the many-feated Bharata,
from whom sprang our great race.

137 All kings after him
are known by his name.
Many among the Bhāratas
were like gods,

138 Many were greatly powerful
monarchs, many
like Brahmā himself.
Their names are countless.

139 O great Bhārata Janamejaya,
I shall name the chief ones,
all blest with good fortune, all
truthful, honest; all like gods.

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: And now, O defectless one, about Prajāpati-Dakṣa, Vaivasvata-Manu, Bharata, Kuru, Ajamīḍha,

2 Yādava, and other kings of the Kaurava race – let me recite before you their famous, inspiring, auspicious,

3 Long histories. They were sun-lustrous; they were radiant maharṣis, all the ones I name now:

4 Praceta had ten sons, all greatly ascetic, known to possess every virtue. With their mouth-fire they could reduce huge trees to ashes.

5 From them was born Pracetas Dakṣa, from whom sprang all creatures. He is therefore called the Grandsire of the Worlds.

6 The ṛṣi Prācetas Dakṣa, from intercourse with Vīriṇī, had one thousand sons, all as rigid-vowed as himself.

7 Nārada taught these thousand sons the excellent philosophy of Sāṁkhya conducive to mokṣa.

8 And the lord of life Prajāpatī Dakṣa, desirous of producing more creatures, had fifty daughters, whom he made his *putrikās*.

9 Ten he bestowed on Dharma, thirteen on Kaśyapa, and twentyseven on Candra (these twentyseven are engaged in the calculation of time).

10 Kaśyapa, son of Maricī, had by his wife, the daughter of Dakṣa (and eldest of his thirteen wives), the Ādityas,

11 The shining gods with Indra at their head, and Vivasvat. Vivasvat's son was mighty Yama.

12 Mārtaṇḍa-Vivasvat had another richly intelligent son named Manu, Yama's elder brother.

13 Manu, wise and a dharmātmā, fathered a race known as the Mānavas or humans.

14 From Manu were born all human beings, Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and others. Later the Brahmins were united with the Kṣatriyas.

15 The Brahmin sons of Manu devoted themselves to study of the Vedas. Others, Vena, Dhṛṣṇu, Nariśyanta, Nābhoga, Ikṣvāku,

16 Kārūṣa, Śaryāti, the eighth a daughter Ilā, the ninth Pṛṣadhra were Kṣatriyas.

17 Nābhāgāriṣṭa was the tenth son of Dakṣa. Manu had fifty more sons,

18 And it is said that they all died quarrelling with each other. Wise Purūravas was Ilā's son.

19 It is said Ilā was both his father and mother. He ruled over the thirteen islands of the ocean. Though human, he mixed only with supra-humans.

20 Drunk with power, Purūravas quarrelled with the Brahmins, ignoring their righteous wrath. He plundered their wealth;

21 And Sanatkumāra came from the realm of Brahmā to give him sane advice; but he did not accept it.

22 The maharṣis were so incensed by this power-mad, unheeding king that they cursed him, as a result of which he instantly died.

23 Purūravas brought from the realm of the gandharvas, apart from the apsarā Urvaśī, three kinds of fire for sacrificial purposes.

24 He had six sons by Urvaśī : Āyus, Dhīmat, Amāvasu, Ḍhriḍāyus, Vanāyus, and Śrutāyus.

25 And Āyus, by Svarbhānavī, had five sons : Nahuṣa, Vṛhadśarmāṇa, Raji, Gaya and Anenas.

26 Of these, Nahuṣa was the most intelligent and strong. He ruled his kingdom with dharma.

27 He paid equal regard to the pitṛs, gods, ṛṣis, gandharvas, nāgas, rākṣasas, Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas.

28 He suppressed gangs of robbers with excessive force; he compelled even the ṛṣis to pay taxes.

29 He dazzled the gods with his handsomeness, his self-discipline, bravery and energy. He ruled the earth like an Indra, and forced the ṛṣis to carry him on their backs, like beasts of burden.

30 Nahusa had five sweet-speaking sons : Yati, Yayāti, Saṁyati, Āyāti, and Dhruva.

31 Yati with the power of yoga became as powerful a ṛṣi as Brahmā himself. Yayāti was an emperor of truth and valour.

32 He ruled over the entire world; performed many yajñas; revered the pitṛs, and honoured the gods.

33 O mahārājā Janamejaya, he ruled with dharma. He was undefeated in war. His sons, highly gifted in every way, were among the finest of bow-men.

34 They were born to his two wives, Śarmiṣṭhā and Devayānī. Devayānī's sons were Yadu and Tarvasu,

35 And Śarmiṣṭhā's were Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru. After he had wisely ruled over his subjects for a long time,

36 Nahuṣa's son was afflicted by a debilitating and disfiguring old age. He said to his sons,

37 Yadu, Tarvasu, Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru:

"My dear sons, help me!
I do not wish to be old.

38 I want to remain young.
I want to enjoy young girls."
His eldest son, Yadu,
By his wife Devāyanī, said:

39 "But what do you want, father?
Do you want our youth?"
Yayāti replied,
"Take my old age.

40 Let me enjoy life with your youth.
Once, during a long sacrifice,
The ṛṣi Uśanas-Śukrācārya cursed me
With loss of my sex-pleasures.

41 Take, any of you, my old age,
Rule the kingdom with my body.
And let me be young again."

42 Yadu and the others refused,
But the youngest, powerful
And truthful Pūru, said:

43 "Take a new body, O rājā,
Be young again.
I will put on old age,
And rule the kingdom."

44 Yayāti, the royal rsi, the rājarṣi,
Used his tapasyā and virility,
And exchanged his old age
With the youth of his son.

45 And he was young again,
With Pūru's youth;
And Pūru ruled the kingdom
With his father's old age.

46 One thousand years passed.
And Yayāti, invincible hero,
Remained strong, young,
As powerful as a tiger.

47 He enjoyed both his wives.
In the gardens of Citraratha,
king of the gandharvas,
He dallied with the apsarā Viśvācī.
And still the kāma of the mahā-illustrious king

48 O rājā, was not satiated.
One day he recalled
The lines of the *gāthā*-singer:

49 *No pleasures satisfy desires.*
Like ghee poured in yajña,
They inflame desire.

50 *Take all the earth,*
All its gold and diamonds,
Its wealth, animals, women,
Enjoy them!
Still is desire not satisfied.

51 *Only when no ill is thought of anyone,*
Only when
Word, thought, and deed are clean
Is one pure
As Brahman is pure.

52 *Only when one fears none,*
And is feared by none,
When one injures none,
When one desires nothing,
Is one pure
As Brahman is pure.

53 The mahā-learned king,
Realising the truth
That kāma never satisfies, never ends,
Took back his old age
From Pūru.

54 The rājā returned his youth
To Pūru,
And installed him on the throne
Disillusioned with kāma, he said:

55 "You are my true son and heir.
May my race be born from you.
May my race be known
In the world through you."

56 Vaiśampāyana said : Yayāti installed Pūru on the throne and went away to the mountain Bhṛgutuṅga to practise mahā-tapasyā.

57 After many years, he fell victim to Kāla-dharma, and went to heaven with his wives.

SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 Janamejaya asked : "How did Yayāti, tenth in line from Prajāpati, win the hand of the unachievable daughter of Śukra-ācārya?

2 Tell us this story in detail, O you whose wealth is tapāsyā. And tell me separately all about the great kings who founded mighty dynasties."

3 Vaiśaṃpāyana replied : King Yayāti was like Devāraja Indra himself in splendour. I will tell you how Śukra and Vṛṣaparva.

4 Bestowed on him their daughters; and I will specially narrate the story of how Nahuṣa's son Yayāti was united with Devayānī.

5 In those days of the distant past, great battles were often fought between the gods and anti-gods for the sovereignty of the three worlds.

6 The gods appointed Bṛhaspati, son of Aṅgiras, their purohita to conduct the sacrifices, in the hope of winning; and the anti-gods likewise appointed Uśanas, or Śukra-ācārya.

7 A great spirit of boastful rivalry prevailed among these two Brahmins. All the Dānavas who were killed in battle by the gods

8 Were revived by Śukra-ācārya the power of his knowledge, and they resumed their conflict with the gods.

9 The anti-gods slew many gods too, whom even the vastly learned Bṛhaspati was unable to bring back to life,

10 Because he did not know the science of saṁjīvanī life-restoration. The powerful ṛṣi Śukra-ācārya knew that science. The gods, depressed,

11 Anxious, and afraid of the learned Śukra-ācārya, hurried to Kaca, eldest son of Bṛhaspati, and said to him:

12 "We seek your protection.
Help us.
Save us in this crisis.
The science of saṁjīvanī
Known to the mighty ṛṣi

13 Śukra-ācārya, must be obtained
From him. If you do so,
You will share our yajña offerings
With us. You will find him
In the court of king Vṛṣaparva,

14 Who protects the Dānava antigods
But neglects their foes, the gods.
You are younger than he,
You can therefore revere him.

15 Revere also Devayānī, who is
Mahā-ātmaned Śukra's favourite daughter.
Please them both.
None better than you for this task.

16 Pleasing Devayāni
By your courtesy, sweetness,
Kindness, generosity, and self-control,
You will discover the secret."

17 The gods honoured him,
And he said, "I will do so."
And he hurried
To the court of king Vṛṣaparva.

18 Running the gods' errand, O rājā,
Kaca went to the city
Of the king of the anti-gods.
He saw Śukra-ācārya and said:

19 "Please make me your disciple.
I am Kaca,
Son of Bṛhaspati,
Grandson of ṛṣi Aṅgiras.

20 With you as my guru,
I will practise brahmacarya
For a thousand years.
Command me."

21 "Be my disciple," replied Śukra-ācārya.
"I accept your words.
By treating you with regard,
I treat Brhaspati with regard."

22 Commanded by Kavi's son
Uśanas, also called Śukra,
Kaca said, "I am yours,"
And took the vow of brahmacarya.

23 O great Bhārata,
He took the vow as promised,
And began to propitiate
His guru and Devayānī.

24 Daily he pleased her,
The young Devayānī,
With songs, and dancing,
And instrumental music.

25 Daily he pleased her,
The virginal Devāyanī,
With flowers and fruits
And a menial's obedience.

26 And Devayānī,
when the two were alone,
privately pleased the strict-vowed youth
with songs and sweet speech.

27 Five hundred years passed;
The anti-gods realised his intention.

28 One day, while he tended
His guru's cattle, they killed him,
Because they hated Bṛhaspati,
And wanted the secret for themselves.

29 They hacked him to pieces,
And fed him to dogs and jackals.
The cattle returned that evening
Without the cowherd.

30 And when Devayānī
Saw the cattle return
Without Kaca, she said
To her father:

31 "Father, *prabhu,* the *agnihotṛ*
Is kindled, the sun has set.
The cattle have returned without the cowherd.
Dear father, *tāta*, I do not see Kaca.

32 O father, *tāta*, I fear
Kaca is dead; perhaps killed.
The truth is, father,
I cannot live without him."

33 Śukra replied, "I will say *Come*!
And revive him." With the help
Of the power of saṁjīvanī
He summoned Kaca,

34 Who, summoned,
Appeared, joyfully,
Tearing through the bodies
Of the devouring dogs.

35 Asked by Devayānī,
"Why this delay?"
He said, "Lovely lady,
Carrying wood and kuśa grass,

36 I was going to the āśrama,
When I felt faint.
I set under a banyan,
The cattle around me in its shade,

37 When some anti-gods spotted me.
'Who are you?' they shouted.
I replied 'Kaca,
Son of Bṛhaspati,'

38 Immediately, they fell on me,
Killed me, cut me up,
Fed me to dogs and jackals,
And gleefully departed.

39 And then, gracious lady,
Your mahā-ātmaned father called me,
And I was alive again,
I do not know how."

40 Another time Kaca went to the forest,
On Devayānī's request, to collect flowers,
The anti-gods pounced on him, killed him,
Ground him to paste, and mixed him in the ocean.

41 Again she told her father
Kaca was late; again Śukra-ācārya called,
Again Kaca appeared before her,
Repeating all that had happened.

42 A third time they killed him.
They burnt him to ashes,
Mixed the ashes in wine,
And offered the wine to Śukra-ācārya.

43 Again Devayānī
Said to her father,
"He went to gather flowers,
But I don't see Kaca.

44 O *tāta,* dear father, I fear
Kaca is dead; perhaps killed.
The truth is, father,
I cannot live without him."

45 Śukra said, "My daughter, Bṛhaspati's son Kaca
Has gone to the land of the dead.
I have revived him again and again.
He is always killed. It's no use.

46 Do not weep, Devayānī,
Do not grieve. Why should you
Grieve for a mere mortal?
Brahmā, Brahmins, gods,

47 Indra, Vasus, Avins, anti-gods,
All the three worlds revere you
At the three prayer-times through my prowess.
I have tried –
I cannot keep him endlessly alive."

48 Devayānī replied:
"His father is the ṛṣi Bṛhaspati,
His grandfather the ṛṣi Aṅgiras –
And you tell me I shouldn't grieve for him?

49 He was a brahmācārī, dutiful,
Rich in tapasyā . . .
Oh, I will starve and die. . . .
Dear father, *tāta*, I love handsome Kaca."

50 Maharṣi Śukra, angry
At Devayānī's words, said:
"The anti-gods want to hurt me!
Or why should they kill my disciple?

51 They want to make me a non-Brahmin
By making me party to killing a Brahmin!
The crime of Brahmin-killing will burn even Indra;
It always has dire consequences."

52 So he summoned Kaca, who,
Mindful of his guru, feebly replied
From inside his stomach:
"Bhagavan! Revered one!
Grant me your grace.
Be compassionate to me
As a father to a son."

53 "So, you have entered my stomach!"
"I remember everything," said Kaca,
"By your grace.
So I am able to bear
This intolerable pain.

54 The anti-gods killed me,
Burnt me, mixed me in your wine.
O great Brahmin, how is it possible
For asura-māyā to overcome Brahmā-māyā?"

55 Śukra said, "O Devayānī,
What can I do? Kaca is inside me.
If he lives, I die. He lives
Only if my stomach is ripped open."

56 "I burn in the fire of two griefs," replied Devayānī,
"Your death and his; equally so.
Kaca dying, I shall know no peace.
With you dead, I cannot live."

57 "Listen, Bṛhaspati's son Kaca!" Śukra said.
"Devayānī is your *bhaktā*, you have triumphed.
If you are not Indra disguised as Kaca,
Accept from me the science of saṁjīvanī.

58 No one can emerge alive
from my stomach,
Except a Brahmin
Therefore, listen:

59 Come to life as my son.
When you emerge from my stomach,
Take the knowledge I as your guru teach you
And use it wisely,
In accordance with dharma."

60 Receiving the secret knowledge of his guru
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Kaca tore open his guru's stomach,
And emerged like a full moon.

61 He saw the remains of his guru
Lying on the ground,
So, with the knowledge he now had,
He revived Śukra-ācārya; and said:

62 "I was ignorant,
and you gave me knowledge,
like *amṛta* in my ears;
You are my father and mother;
never can the grateful disciple
wish ill of his teacher.

63 The man who disrespects his teacher,
after receiving knowledge,
is the most hated being on earth,
and goes to the regions of the wicked,
for the guru is a giver of knowledge,
he is the most precious of all."

64 Deceived under the influence of wine,
Recalling the sad consequence of drink,
The loss of sense, the resulting shame,
And seeing before him the handsome Kaca,

65 Whom he had drunk along with the wine,
Śukra-ācārya stood up and angrily,
With the aim of reforming Brahmins' manners,
Declared:

66 “The stupid Brahmin who drinks
Liquor from this day —
He falls from dharma,
He is like a Brahmin-killer:
He will be hated
In this world and the next.

67 Let this be the test
Of the dharma of Brahmins –
I declare it so. Let honest men
And gods, and those who respect
Gurus, hear me!”

68 The ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā said this,
And summoned the Dānava anti-gods
Whose reason had been stolen
By fate, and he warned them:

69 “Foolish anti-gods!
Mahātmā Kaca has obtained what he wanted,
The secret of saṁjīvanī.
He is a Brahmā-powerful Brahmin now.”

70 He said this much,
And suddenly stopped.
The astonished Danāva anti-gods
Returned to their homes.

71 Kaca lived with his guru
One thousand years;
Then, with Śukra’s permission,
He went to the realm of the gods.

SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : When the period of Kaca's vow had ended, and he was preparing with Śukra's permission to go to the realm of the gods, Devayānī said to him:

2 "Maharṣi Aṅgiras's grandson,
You shine in character,
In birth, in learning,
In discipline and humility.

3 Just as my mahā-illustrious father
honours and repects ṛṣi Āñgiras
I honour and respect
your father Bṛhaspati.

4 Because you know this,
listen to me, you whose wealth is tapasyā:
You know how I felt for you
when you were keeping your vow.

5 Your vow is now over. I am your *bhaktā.*
I love you. Accept me.
Take my hand in yours
with the proper mantras."

6 Kaca replied:
"I have feelings of pūjā-respect for you
and you deserve my pūjā-respect
Lovely lady, faultless one,
I revere you more than I do your father.

7 You are dearer than life to your mahātmā father,
gracious lady,
You are my guru's daughter,
dharma says you deserve my pūjā-respect

8 Just as I honour my guru, your father,
I honour you.
O Devayānī,
do not speak to me like this."

9 Devayānī replied:
"Good Brahmin, you are my father's
guru's son; my father's disciple;
you too deserve my pūjā-respect,
O finest of the twice-born.

10 Yet consider, Kaca:
when the anti-gods killed you,
was not I the one
who showed love towards you?

11 You who are wise in dharma, remember my love,
think of my feelings,
do not spurn the faultless bhakti
of a devoted person".

12 Kaca said:

"It is wrong! It is wrong!
Virtuous-vowed, lovely lady,
do not urge me again!
I honour you more than my guru.

13 Large-eyed lady, moon-faced one,
gracious one, where you live,
in the womb of Śukra,
I, lovely lady, live too.

14 According to dharma, you are my sister.
Slim-waisted lady, gracious one, enough!
Happy were the days we spent together;
may the feeling now between us be happy too.

15 Give me freedom to go. Bless me.
May my going be fruitful.
Talk of me as of one firm in dharma.
Serve my guru readily and totally."

16 Devayānī replied:
"If you, Kaca, spurn me
who comes to you with dharma-kāma-artha,
useless will be your learning,
your life fruitless."

17 Kaca said:

"I refused you because
you are my guru's daughter,
not for any fault in you.
My guru gave me no advice in this matter.

18 Devayānī, I am a rsi!
I do not deserve your curse.
You have cursed me today
out of passion, not prudence,
kāma, not dharma.

19 Since kāma motivates you,
your kāma will go unfed;
no son of a ṛṣi will take
your hand in marriage.

20 Fruitless will be my learning,
according to you. Very well.
But it will fructify
in those to whom I give it."

21 He said this to Devayānī,
and hurriedly went,
that best of the twice-born,
to the realm of the gods.

22 They saw him coming,
Indra and the other gods.
Delighted they turned
to Bṛhaspati and said:

23 "For this wonderful good done to us,
your fame will never perish;
O marvellous feat-performer, share
with us the sacrificial gifts."

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : The gods were happy to have Kaca back. They learnt the secret of saṁjīvanī from him, and, were convinced that they could accomplish their aims.

2 In a group they went to Indra of a hundred sacrifices, and said : "The time has come. Destroy your enemies, Puraṁdara-Indra."

3 Indra replied, "I will do so." Accompanied by the gods, he set out; on his way he chanced on some girls.

4 Sporting in a lake in a wood that tesembled the garden of Citraratha, chief of the gandharvas. He transformed himself into a gust of wind, and scattered their garments.

5 They rose out of the waters of the lake, and each picked up the garment next to her,

6 With the result that Devayānī's garment was mistakenly taken by Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter of Vṛṣaparva.

7 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya, a furious dispute broke out between the two girls.

8 Devayānī shouted, "How dare you touch my garment, your daughter of an asura? Don't you know you are my disciple? Where are your manners, you good-for-nothing girl?"

9 And Śarmiṣṭhā retorted, "*Your* father sits lower than *my* father, whether my father is sitting or reclining. Your father keeps his eyes fixed on the ground, and sings my father's praises, like a hired chanter.

10 You are the daughter of a professional praise-chanter, I am the daughter of one whose praises are chanted. Your father begs, my father bestows alms. You are an alms-beggar's daughter, I an alms-giver's daughter.

11 Beat your breast, beggar girl! Shout, rant, curse! Weep away! I can harm you, you can't harm me! And I won't even quarrel with you – you are not my equal.

If you dare to say anything against me, I'll order my maids to drag you away and throw you out!"

12 Devayānī went livid with anger (continued Vaiśampāyana) when she heard this. She began tearing her dress. Śarmiṣṭhā pushed her down a well, and ran away.

13 The wicked Śarmiṣṭhā thought her dead, and went away to her home in an inflamed mood.

14 She had hardly left when Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, came on a deer-hunt to the spot. The two horses of his chariot were panting, and he was himself thirsty.

15 He stopped near a well, but found it dry. Inside the well, he saw a girl of flaming beauty.

16 He spoke to the goddess in the well, sweetly, with soft words:

17 "Lovely dark-blue complexioned lady, Śyāmā,
Who are you
With nails like burnished copper,
And ear-rings like divine gems?
Why are you alone? Why are you weeping?

18 How did you fall
In this mossy, creeper-covered well?
Slim-waisted beauty,
Tell me, whose daughter are you?"

19 Devayānī replied:
"I am the daughter of Śukra,
Who revives the anti-gods
When they are killed by the gods.
He does not know I am here.

20 Who are you,
Handsome, virile, strong?
What brings you here?
Why are you asking me this?"

21 "Lovely lady," replied Yayāti.
"I am Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa.
Exhausted on a deer hunt,
I paused near this moss-covered well."

22 "Rājā," she said, "here's my right hand
With burnished copper-bright nails.
Because you are noble,
Take my hand, and lift me up.

23 Because you are brave,
And famous, and chivalrous,
Lift me out of this well."

24 When the son of Nahuṣa
Heard she was a Brahmin's daughter,
He reached out, took her hand,
And pulled her out of the well.

25 The king told Devayānī,
"You can go now any where you like.
Have no fear."

26 Devayānī, said : "Take me with you.
I love you. You have held my right hand.
You are now my husband."

27 He said : "I am a Brahmin, you a Ksatriya.
How can we be one? Your father
Is Śukra guru of the three worlds.
I fear him. Lovely lady, you deserve better."

28 "Reject my words if you like, O king,"
She said. "But I'll get my father to order you.
Then you will have to agree."

29 It was done in a moment.
He spoke softly and courteously
To the lovely lady of tapering thighs,
And went back to his capital.

30 After Nahuṣa's departure the fine-featured lady Devāyānī sat sadly under a tree, crying.

31 Bhṛgu'is son Śukra, worried why she was taking so long to return, said to one of her maids:

32 "Maid, go quickly, and see where my sweet-smiling daughter is, and bring her here immediately."

33 The maid hurried to all the places where Devāyānī and her friends went to play, and found her under a tree, weeping disconsolately.

34 She said, "What has happened, tell me. Your father wants you back now!" Devayānī told the maid Ghūrṇikā what Śarmiṣṭhā had done. Weeping she said to Ghūrṇika:

35 "Run, Ghūrṇikā, to my father, and tell him all that has happened to me. I refuse to set foot in the city of Vṛṣaparva."

36 Ghūrṇikā hurried to the place of the anti-gods; her words blurring with anger, she said:

37 "Mahābhāgā, mahā-fortunate one, I can tell you – the lady Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter of Vṛṣaparva, abused my lady Devāyānī in the forest."

38 With a heavy heart Śukra set out for the forest to search for his daughter.

39 When he found her, he clasped her lovingly to his chest, and choking with sorrow, said:

40 "Whatever good or bad
comes to a person
is usually well-deserved.
What was your fault,
my daughter,
that you have had to expiate?"

41 Devāyānī replied: "Fault or not,
first listen to me, father!
This is what Śarmiṣṭhā,
Vṛṣaparva's daughter, said to me –

42 *You are a hired chanter,* she said,
the asura king's chanter.
That's what Śarmiṣṭhā,
Vṛṣaparva's daughter, said,

43 Her eyes flaming with hate,
her words sharp and cruel –
A professional chanter's daughter,
a beggar's daughter,

44 *And I* – she said –
I am an alms-giver's daughter,
not an alms-receiver's –
that's what she said, again and again,
proud Śarmiṣṭhā, Vṛṣaparva's daughter,
the red-eyed one.

45 Father, tell me –
am I a hired chanter's daughter?
a beggar's daughter?
For if I am, I will go
to her, worship her, take alms
from her. I told her so.

46 Despite that, Śarmiṣṭhā,
bristliang with anger,
pushed me in the well, and went away."

47 Śukra said:
"Devayānī, you are neither
a hired chanter's daughter
nor a beggar's. You are the daughter
of a man who is adored by all,
the daughter of a man
who is lower than none.

48 Vṛṣaparva, Indra, and
Rājā Yayāti know
my strength is like Brahmā's,
incalculable, invincible.

49 Svayambhu Self-Born Brahmā-himself,
pleased with me, told me
I was lord of all there is on earth
as well as in heaven.

50 I can tell you this –
I send rain for everyone's good,
I feed the yearly plants
that sustain all life."

51 With these sweet and sensible words (continued Vaiśampāyana) the father tried to calm his woe-afflicted, hot-tempered daughter.

SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 Śukra said :
"My knowledge is total.
It is not affected by opposites.
I am above
meanness
crookedness
deviousness
and adharma.

2 According to wise men,
the true charioteer
knows when to rein tightly.
The true man curbs his anger.

3 Devayānī, whoever
without anger rules anger,
is the greatest conqueror
known on earth.

4 And he who rules anger
with patience – like a snake
casting off its skin –
he is really a man.

5 Who rules anger, who ignores malice,
who is not angered
even when there's cause – such a man
achieves the four ends of life.

6 Take two men: one performs yajñas
every month for a hundred years,
the other has learnt to rule his anger.
The second is the greater man.

7 Useless are yajña, charity,
tapas self-discipline
if you cannot control anger.
Mahā-fruitful are yajña, charity and tapas
if your anger is controlled.

8 No merit, no tapasyā benefits
the anger-dominated man;
how will he know what good karma is?
Neither this world nor the other is his.

9 If anger becomes your second nature,
sons, wealth, friends,
wife, dharma and truth
will desert you.

10 Boys and girls who
cannot tell right from wrong
quarrel needlessly. Wise ones
don't follow their example."

11 Devayānī replied:
"Father, I realise I am a young girl,
but I know what dharma is;
I also know who to blame
and who to tolerate.

12 When a pupil is disrespectful,
he cannot be excused
by a teacher who seeks his welfare.
I refuse to stay in this country.

13 A wise man with noble intentions
should not live with men
who have evil motives, who slander
people of high birth and character.

14 Where high birth and character
are valued, that is
the only place to live.
This I believe, father.

15 Excellent is even the poor man
who controls himself;
like a *caṇḍāla* outcaste is a rich man
who does ill-deeds.

16 No self-respecting person should mix
with people
who needlessly misbehave
and find fault with others.
Mix with the wicked, and you
became wicked.
Wickedness becomes a terrible obsession;
which is why it should be avoided.

17 My heart burns
with the cruel words of Śarmiṣṭhā,
as dry fuel burns
when men set a light to it.

18 I think it's wretched to respect
one's enemies in high estate,
when one is oneself demeaned.
Death is preferable, so wise men say

19 Mixing with the mean
makes you mean.
Ugly words get spoken,
causing sleepless days and might.

20 Weapons, poison and fire
hurt – but one slowly recovers.
Ugly words never stop hurting,
never heal.

21 The wise refrain from bitter words.
refrain from bitter words.
An arrow-sliced tree grows again,
an axe-chopped forest grows again,
But a word-wounded heart
never heals."

SECTION EIGHTY

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : That roused to anger even Śukra, son of Kavi, and best of the Bhṛgus. He went to Vṛṣaparva and said without mincing his words:

2 "O rājā, deeds of adharma,
like seeds, don't bear fruit instantly.
They grow slowly, secretly,
till they overwhelm the evil-doer.

3 The fruits of wicked deeds
appear in oneself, one's son,
even one's grandson. Like rich food,
they cannot be digested. They will out.

4 Because you killed Kaca,
Aṅgiras's grandson,
virtuous, learned, dutiful Kaca,
when he lived with me,

5 Because you have insulted
my daughter without her deserving it,
I take leave of you, Vṛṣaparva,
and your race.

6 I can no longer stay with you.
No, I do not lie,
I am not mad. It is just that
you do not try to correct your faults.

7 Vṛṣaparva replied :
"Son of Bhṛgu, never once
have I attributed untruth
or adharma to you. Always truthful,
always virtuous one, excuse me.

8 For if you leave me and go,
there is no choice left us
but to run and hide
in the depths of the ocean.

9 If you leave me
and join the gods,
I will leave everything,
and jump in a fire
and kill myself."

10 Śukra said:
"It is the same to me, O anti-god,
whether you hide in the ocean
or scatter in the sky.
I am prostrate with my daughter's grief.

11 My life depends on her.
Go if you will, you anti-gods,
and placate her. Just as Bṛhaspati
seeks Indra's good, I seek yours."

12 "Son of Bhṛgu," said Vṛṣaparva,
"you are lord of all that belongs
to the anti-gods: elephants,
cattle, horses, even myself."

13 "In that case, if it is really so
that I am lord of the asuras,"
said Śukra, "all the more reason
that you should try to please Devayānī."

14 Moved by the words of the king of the anti-gods, both went to Devayānī, and Śukra told her everything.

15 "Bhṛgu's son, dear father," she said,
"if you are really lord
of the anti-god king and his wealth,
let him personally say so before me."

16 "Sweet-smiling Devayānī, Vṛṣaparva said,
"whatever you wish to have –
no matter how difficult to get –
I will give you."

17 "I desire to have," replied Devayānī
"Śarmiṣṭhā as my maid
with one thousand other maids
to attend on me. Also,
she will follow me to the house
where my father bestows me."

18 Vṛṣaparva said to a maid,
"Go, fetch Śarmiṣṭhā here.
She will behave exactly
as Devayānī orders her.

19 Sacrifice an individual for a family,
a family for a village;
sacrifice a village for the country,
sacrifice the world for the ātman."

20 The maid hurried to Śarmiṣṭhā (continued Vaiśampāyana) and said, "Gracious lady Śarmiṣṭhā, rise and follow me.

21 Fulfil the welfare of your race. At Devayānī's insistence, the Brahmin Śukra is about to forsake the anti-gods. Defectless lady, do as she commands."

22 "With all my heart," said Śarmiṣṭhā.
"Neither Sukra nor Devayānī
must leave the anti-gods
through any lapse on my part."

23 Ordered by her father, Śarmiṣṭhā, in a palanquin, and one thousand maids came out of Vṛṣaparva's abode.

24 She said to Devayānī
"I am your maid,
along with these thousand. I will follow you
wherever your father bestows you."

25 "But I am the daughter," replied Devayānī,
"of a hired praise-chanter,
I am the daughter of a beggar.
And you are the daughter
of a highly respected person.
Why should you be my maid?"

26 "When one's family is in trouble,"
replied Śarmiṣṭhā, "one tries
to be of help. I will follow you
wherever your father bestows you."

27 O best among kings (continued Vaiśampāyana), when Śarmiṣṭhā agreed to be her maidservant, Devayānī said to her father.

28 "Father, I am satisfied.
I will now go to the asura capital.
I now see that your powers
are not fruitless, your knowledge is potent."

29 When he heard his daughter speak to him in this manner, that best of Brahmins, Śukra, happily entered the capital of the anti-gods, where he was given due reverence by the Dānavas.

SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 A long time after this occurred, O best of kings Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana went on), the lovely lady Devayānī went to the same forest to enjoy herself.

2 She came to the same spot. With her were Śarmiṣṭhā and the thousand maids. She gave herself up to pleasure.

3 She was very happy, having so many maids to wait on her. They were all in a frivolous mood; they began sipping the honey of the flowers;

4 They nibbled at various fruits. King Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, in the course of a deer hunting expedition,

5 Happened to come there, tired and thirsty. His eyes fell on Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā and the thousand maids,

6 Glittering with ornaments,
Tipsy with flower-honey.
Sweet-smiling Śucismitā, Devayānī,
Voluptuously reclining,

7 Paragon of beauty,
Loveliest of them all, Varāṅganā,
And Śarmiṣṭhā beside her,
Gently massaging her feet.

8 "Gracious ladies," said Yayāti,
"It seems these thousand maids
Wait on you. Who are you?
Who are your parents?"

9 "I am the daughter of Śukra,"
replied Devayānī
"My father is the guru
of the anti-gods.

10 This girl here is my maid,
who goes wherever I go;
she is Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter
of the asura king, Vṛṣaparva."

11 "Strange – why should this lady
of lovely eye-brows, be your maid?
Why should the daughter of the Indra-of-the asuras
be your maidservant?"

12 "Fate," replied Devayānī,
Fate is behind everything.
Do not be astonished, O finest of men.
This too is Fate's work.

13 Your dress and your features
are those of a rājā.
Your words like the Vedas'. Who are you?
from where? whose son?"

14 "When I was a brahmacārī,"
Yayati replied,
"I learnt the Vedas. I am a rājā,
and the son of a rājā. I am Yayāti."

15 "Why are you here, O king?"
asked Devayānī.
"Is it to gather lotuses,
to fish, perhaps to hunt?"

16 "I was hunting deer, gracious girl,"
he said, "I felt thirsty,
and came here for water. If you wish,
I will leave immediately."

17 "Far from it, O king!
Stay here and be my lord.
With me are a thousand maids
and my personal maid Śarmiṣṭhā."

18 "Lovely lady, Bhāvinī, I don't deserve you.
You are far above me,
you are Śukra's daughter. He dare not
bestow you on a Kṣatriya rājā."

19 "Brahmins have married Kṣatriyas before,"
she said, "and Kṣatriyas Brahmins.
You are a rāja-ṛṣi's son, and yourself a rājā-ṛṣi.
Son of Nahuṣa, marry me."

20 "Granted, lovely lady, the four castes
sprang from one body,
but their dharmas and natures differ.
The Brahmin is certainly superior."

21 "No one," said Devayānī,
"has touched my hand except you.
For that reason alone,
I accept you as my husband.

22 Tell me, how will anyone else
touch my hand
which has once been touched
by a person no less than a rāja-ṛṣi?

23 Yayāti said, "Wise men say
a Brahmin is more fearsome
than a roused poisonous snake
or an engulfing fire."

24 "Why," asked Devayānī,
"is a Brahmin more fearsome
than a roused poisonous snake
or an engulfing fire?"

25 "A snake kills one person.
The sharpest weapon kills one person.
But an angered Brahmin
destroys cities and kingdoms.

26 Therefore, lovely lady, I say
a Brahmin's more fearsome.
Sweet lady, I cannot marry you
unless your father approves."

27 "I chose you," said Devayānī "You did not ask
for me. My father will approve,
you will marry me.
Why be afraid? You are getting without asking."

28 She quickly sent a maid to her father (continued Vaiśampāyana), and the maid reported all that happened to Śukra.

29 Śukra hurried to the rājā. Yayāti saw him approaching, and offered him añjali with joined palms, awaiting his advice.

30 "Father," said Devayānī,
"this is Nahuṣa's son rājā Yayāti.
who touched my hand in the well. I namaskāra you.
I will not marry any other man."

31 "Noble son of Nahusa!" said Śukra.
"My dear daughter has chosen you,
and I gladly bestow her on you.
Accept her as your wife."

32 Yayati said, "O son of Bhṛgu!
Grant me the favour
of being free of the mahā-adharma
of an inter-caste marriage."

33 "I shall do so," replied Śukra.
"Do not fear to marry her.
I hereby absolve you of the adharma
of an inter-caste marriage.

34 Regard her with dharma, she is my Devayānī,
my slender-waisted daughter.
May great happiness be yours.
in the company of my daughter.

35 And as for Śarmiṣṭhā,
treat her well, O rājā:
she is Vṛṣaparva's daughter.
But do not call her to your bed.

36 Do not meet Śarmiṣṭhā in secret,
do not ever touch her.
You are now married to my daughter :
She will bring you good fortune."

37 Rājā Yayati circled the Brahmin in pradakṣinā, and passed through the marriage ceremony according to the rites ordained in the śāstras.

38 He received from Śukra the priceless treasure of Devayānī, along with Śarmiṣṭhā and a thousand maids.

39 Honoured by Śukra and the anti-gods, he retuned to his capital, keeping in mind the advice of the shining son of Bhṛgu.

SECTION EIGHTY-TWO

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : Yayāti entered his capital, (which was like Amarāvati, the capital of Indra himself), and escorted his wife Devayānī to the inner apartments.

2 At Devayānī's suggestion, he ordered the construction of a house in the aśoka grove of his gardens for Śarmiṣṭhā.

3 He honoured Śarmiṣṭhā by ordering a thousand maids to attend on her and by making every arrangement for her food and garments.

4 Devayānī used to visit the lovely aśoka-grove with rājā Yayati,

5 And then she and rājā would go to their palace. She passed her days happily following this routine.

6 And many years passed with Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, enjoying the company of Devayānī.

7 The lovely lady Varāṅgaṇā Devayānī conceived when her season came, and gave birth to a son.

8 A thousand years passed. Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter of Vṛṣaparva, attained puberty. During her period, she began to worry.

9 She bathed. She purified herself.She adorned herself with ornaments. She went to the flower-fragrant aśoka-grove.

10 She sat down. She looked at her face in a mirror. She yearned for a darshan of her husband.Stricken with mahā-confusion and śoka-sorrow, she said:

11 "O aśoka tree!
You who remove the śoka-grief of the sorrow-
stricken!
Grant me a darshan of my husband's face!
Remove my śoka!"

12 She continued:
"I am in my period.
But I haven't chosen a husband.
What will happen? what should I do?
How will I get what I want?

13 Devayānī has a son.
But my youth is wasted.
I will choose him as husband
Whom Devayānī chose.

14 I will bear the rājā a son.
My mind is made up.
He is a dharmātmā rājā –
He will let me meet him in private."

15 One day the king happened casually to pass by the aśoka grove. Seeing Śarmiṣṭhā there, he stopped.

Śarmiṣṭhā, sweet-smiling lady, saw that they were alone together, joined her palms in greeting, and said:

16 "O son of Nahuṣa,
no one sees the ladies in the inner apartments
of Soma, Indra, Viṣṇu, Yama, and Varuṇa –
you are like them in this respect.

17 O rājā, I am of noble birth,
I am considered beautiful.
I am in my period.
O let me not be wasted!"

18 Yayāti replied :
“I know you are a blameless lady
in the race of the Daitya antigods.
Your beauty is ravishing.
There is not the least fault in you.

19 But Devayānī’s father’s words to me, when I married her, were : Do not call Vṛṣaparva’s daughter to your bed.”

20 Śarmiṣṭhā replied : “Five kinds of lying are excusable : when joking, when enjoying a woman, at the time of marriage, when facing death, and when one has lost all one’s wealth.

21 O Indra-among-rājās, it is not true that only that person does wrong who does not tell the truth when asked. You told a lie when you said you would have only one of us. Devayānī and I came together; you cannot leave me out.”

22 “A rājā should always set an example to his subjects,” Yayati said. “A king who lies invites his own ruin. I dare not lie, even under fear of the direst loss!”

23 Śarmiṣṭhā continued, “When a loved-and-loving friend, a *sakhī*, marries, it’s as if oneself marries. My *sakhī* has chosen you as her husband. You are my husband too.

24 O rājā! Maharṣi Śukra asked me to serve you devotedly. His advice should not be flouted.

25 It is easy to grant gifts of gold, gems, jewels, garments, cows, and land. These are all external gifts.

26 O king, they are not gifts of the body.
It is difficult to grant a son-gift, a body-gift.
No gift is higher than a son-gift, a body-gift.

27 Son of Nahuṣa! Three times you have proclaimed in the streets of the city. 'I will give to anyone whatever anyone needs and asks.'

28 If you refuse me, your word is valueless. Who will ever trust you? O Indra-among-rājās! Keep your word. Be true to your word."

29 "True, I have taken a vow to grant whatever is asked," said Yayāti. "And now you ask me this . . . You tell me, what should I do?"

30 "Save me from adharma,"
Said Śarmiṣṭhā.
"Be lord of my dharma,
Make me a mother,
That I may practise the highest dharma.

31 O rājā,
A wife, a slave, a son,
Do not earn for themselves:
Whatever they earn
Belongs to whoever is their lord:
A wife's husband, a slave's master, a son's father.

32 I am Devayānī's slave,
You are Devayānī's lord;
You are therefore my lord.
I beg of you:
Do as I ask you."

33 These words of Śarmiṣṭhā persuaded the king to believe whatever she spoke was true. He did as asked, and did the dictate of dharma.

34 They lovingly came together, and lovingly parted, each returning to where each stayed.

35 Sweet-smiling Śucismitā Śarmiṣṭhā
of lovely eye-brows
conceived as a result
of that union with the king.

36 And in due time, O rājā Janamejaya,
to the lotus-eyed lady
was born a god-like son,
a radiant son with lotus-leaf eyes.

SECTION EIGHTY-THREE

1 When Devayānī learnt of the birth of this boy (continued Vaiśampāyana) she became sad and resentful. She went to Śarmiṣṭhā and said:

2 "Śarmiṣṭhā, lovely-eye-browed girl, how wicked you are – indulging your lust!"

3 Śarmiṣṭhā replied "A dharmātmā ṛṣi came to me, a ṛṣi learned in the Vedas. He had the power of granting boons, and I asked him to grant me one, as decreed by dharma.

4 Sweet-smiling lady, I would not dream of fulfilling my desires by wicked means. My son is the child of a ṛṣi – this is the truth."

5 "In that case, sweet Śarmiṣṭhā, I will not blame you," said Devayānī. "Who is this ṛṣi? What is his name and family? Tell me."

6 "Sweet-smiling lady," replied Śarmiṣṭhā, "that ṛṣi shone like the sun, his tapasyā had radiance. I hadn't the courage to ask him."

7 "If what you say is true, if indeed your son has been fathered by such an excellent twice-born, I have no reason to be angry with you," said Devayānī.

8 They laughed and conversed for some time; and Devayānī returned to her mansion, believing all that Śarmiṣṭhā, had told her.

9 Devayānī had two more sons by Yayāti – Yadu and Turvasu; they were like Śakra-Indra and Viṣṇu.

10 And Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter of Vṛṣaparva, by that royal ṛṣi had three sons: Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru.

11 One day, sweet-smiling Devayānī went with Yayāti for a walk in a secluded part of the royal gardens.

12 There she saw three children of divine beauty, merrily playing. Surprised, she said to the rājā:

13 "Whose children are these?
They are handsome – just like
children of the gods – like you !"

14 She turned to the children : "Who is your father, little ones? Tell me. Where do you live?"

15 They pointed their fingers at the king (continued Vaiśampāyana) and indicated that Śarmiṣṭhā was their mother.

16 And they ran towards their father and clasped his knees. But the rājā dare not caress them in front of Devayānī.

17 Sobbing, they left the place, and went to find their mother. Their behaviour embarrassed the king greatly.

18 From the affection of the boys, Devayānī guessed the truth. She went to Śarmiṣṭhā and said:

19 "You said some ṛṣi used to come to you. So, lovely Śarmiṣṭhā, rājā Yayāti is the ṛṣi who used to visit you! Didn't I tell you the very first thing – that you are wicked!

19 You are dependent on me,
And yet you insult me like this!
Aren't you ashamed at all? –
So this is the despicable dharma of the anti-gods!"

21 Śarmiṣṭhā replied:
"Sweet-smiling lady
All I said about the ṛṣi is true.
What I did was perfectly
In accordance with dharma.

22 I am not afraid of you.
When you chose him as your husband,
I chose him too. Lovely lady,
According to dharma, a *sakhī's* husband
Is one's own husband.

23 You are a Brahmin's daughter –
So I respect you. You deserve my pūjā-respect.
But don't you know how much more
I respect a rājarṣi?

24 Your father, who is my guru also,
gave both of us to the king.
And the king, who deserves my pūjā-respect,
accepted me and promised to look after me."

25 Devayānī listened; and said,
"You have wronged me, O rājā.
I refuse to stay here any more."

26 She went with tears in her eyes
To her father. The king was alarmed
To see her so angry.

27 Apprehensive, he followed her,
Trying to placate her.
She would not return.
Her eyes flashed with anger;

28 She refused to speak to him.
Weeping, she stood before her father,
Śukra, son of Kavi.

29 She offered her father pūjā-respect
And stood before him. Yayati
Stood behind her, and
Offered his respects also.

30 Devayānī said "Father,
Adharma's defeated dharma!
The low rise, the high fall.
I have been insulted and superseded
By Vṛṣaparva's daughter.

31 This rājā here, Yayāti,
Has three sons by her;
And me – unfortunate me –
I have only two.

32 Son of Bhrgu, they say
This rājā knows dharma.
But I tell you, father,
He has violated dharma."

33 Śukra said, "If you have willingly chosen the path of adharma, mahārāja, no matter how conversant you are with the precepts of dharma, doddering old age will be your punishment."

34 Yayāti replied, "Bhagavan, revered one, the daughter of the king of the anti-gods came to me after her period, and implored me. I fulfilled her desire from a sense of dharma.

35 Those learned in the Vedas declare that a man who does not grant the request of a woman after her period is guilty of killing a foetus.

The man who is secretly solicited by a woman driven by kāma after her period and refuses to fulfil her desire, loses dharma. The wise say he commits foeticide.

I have vowed to grant the desire of anyone who asks me for anything. You bestowed Śarmiṣṭhā on me, and she will not have any other man for husband. To me fulfilling her desire was my dharma. Forgive me for this.

36 This was why, O son of Bhṛgu, I obliged Śarmiṣṭhā. I was afraid I would be guilty of adharma otherwise."

37 Śukra said, "You could have waited till I approved. My conditions were clear. because, O son of Nahuṣa, you have not been true to the dharma your pledged, you are guilty of theft."

38 Śukra then angrily cursed him, stripping him of his youthfulness and casting decrepitude on him.

38 Yayāti pleaded:
"I am young, O son of Bhṛgu,
I haven't had my fill of youth
Or of Devayani. Be merciful,
O Brahmin. Take age away from me."

40 Śukra said:
"I never speak pointlessly.
Old age will overcome you.
If you wish, however, you may
Exchange it with a willing youth."

41 "Make this condition then, O Brahmin," said Yayāti, "that whichever of my sons accepts my old age will enjoy my kingdom and gain dharma and fame."

42 "Son of Nahuṣa," replied Śukra, "keep me in mind and you will be able to achieve the transfer of your old age on to a willing youth. No guilt will attach to you for this.

43 Whichever of your sons exchanges his youth with you will be your successor. He will have long life, universal fame, and any number of children."

SECTION EIGHTY-FOUR

1 Afflicted with decaying old age, Yayāti returned to his capital (continued Vaiśampāyana). He called his eldest and most gifted son Yadu to him and said:

2 "My child, I am old.
Śukra, son of Kavi, has cursed me
With wrinkles and white hair.
And I haven't even had my fill of youth.

3 Yadu,
Take this old age and decay.
With your youth,
Let me enjoy life.

4 After one thousand years,
I will return your youth
And take back my old age
And its debility."

5 "Old age, O rājā," replied Yadu,
"Makes eating and drinking inconveninent.
I am sorry, father,
I cannnot accept your offer.

6 Old age brings
White hair, listlessness,
Weak nerves, tiredness, emaciation;
Young girls and dependents
Forsake an old man.

7 You have many sons,
Some dearer to you than I.
You are wise in dharma.
Ask one of them, father,
To take your old age."

8 "Child of my heart, *tāta,*
Said Yayāti, "yet you
Will not give me your youth.
May your children never rule!

9 Turvasu, take my old age
And all its defects and miseries.
Let me enjoy life
With your youth.

10 After one thousand years,
I will return your youth,
And take back my old age
And its debility."

11 "Dear father," replied Turvasu,
"I don't much care for old age.
It blights gaiety and pleasure,
Strength, beauty, intelligence –
Even life itself."

12 "Child of my heart,"
Saidy Yayāti, "yet you
Will not give me your youth.
May your line become extinct!

13 And you, Turvasu,
May you be the foolish rājā
Of subjects following despicable dharma,

14 Of high-caste women
Breeding children by low-class men;
Of meat-eaters, malice-mongers,

15 Rapists of wives of their gurus,
Followers of brute and beast dharma,
All criminals, all *mlecchas.*"

16 When he had finished cursing his son Turvasu, he turned to Śarmiṣṭhā's son Druhyu, and said:

17 "Druhyu, take a thousand years
Of my spoiler-of-loveliness,
Blotcher-of-skin old age.
Give me your youth.

18 After one thousand years,
I will return your youth
And take back my old age
And its debility."

19 "Father," replied Druhyu,
"An old man cannot mount
Elephants, horses, chariots, and women.
His voice squeaks. I am sorry."

20 "Child of my heart,"
Said Yayāti, "yet you
Will not give me your youth.
May your wishes never be fulfilled!

21 Be a king only in name!
Rule a kingdom without roads,
Without passages for horses,

22 Elephants, asses, goats, bullocks
Or palanquins; only rafts and boats.
There live with your progeny and friends!
Not as a rājā – but branded a Bhoja!

23 And your Anu, take my old age
And its weaknesses,
With your youth
Let me enjoy a thousand years."

24 "Old men," replied Anu,
"Slobber like infants, and are filthy.
They cannot pour libations in the yajña
At the right time.
You must excuse me, father."

25 "Child of my heart,"
Said Yayāti, "yet you
Will not give me your youth.
Old age fault-finder, may old age overtake you!

26 May your sons die
As soon as they come of age!
May you become so feeble as to be unable
To perform any yajña!

27 Pūru, my youngest, my dearest,
You will excel them all.
Look, child, old age,
Wrinkles, white hair –

28 The result of Śukra's curse –
And I haven't even had my fill of youth.
Pūru, take my old age and its weaknesses.
Let me enjoy a thousand years with your youth.

29 After one thousand years,
I will return your youth
And take back my old age
And its debility."

30 Pūru heard his father's words carefully
And replied humbly,
"Mahārāja, I will do
What you command me.

31 To follow the words of one's elders is to obtain Merit, heaven, and long life. Śatakratā-Indra of a hundred sacrifices obtained lordship of the three worlds by the grace of his elders. To follow the advice of one's father is to obtain every possible desire.

32 I will take on myself
Your old age and its debility.
Take my youth, and
Enjoy life for a thousand years.

33 Afflicted with old age,
Deprived of youth and beauty,
I will live at your command,
And give you my youth."

34 "Pūru, my child, I am pleased with you,"
Said Yayāti. "Take this boon:
May the subjects of your kingdom
Have all their desires fulfilled."

35 He called to mind the ṛṣi of maha-tapāsyā, Śukra, son of Kavi, and projected his crumbling age into the body of his mahā-atmaned son Pūru.

SECTION EIGHTY-FIVE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued : Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, took the youth of Pūru, and rejoiced. He began to indulge himself sensually.

2 O Indra-among-rājās Janamejaya! He enjoyed himself as much as his energy permitted in all variety of ways and in all seasons. He took care, however, not to transgress the bounds of dharma.

3 He pleased the gods by performing many yajñas, the pitṛs by śrāddhas, the poor by his charity, the twice-born by giving them whatever they desired,

4 The guests by lavish hospitality, the Vaiśyas by vigilant protection, the Śūdras by kindness, and the robbers by appropriate punishment.

5 Yayāti pleased all his subjects by ruling according to the dictates of dharma, even as Indra does. He was like a second Indra.

6 He had a lion's strength; he was young; he tasted all the pleasures of life. His joys were unbounded, and he did not transgress the dictates of dharma.

7 The fact that he was able to enjoy all the sensual delights life had to offer thrilled him; his only sorrow was that the thousand years would soon come to an end.

8 That rājarṣi, wise in the mystery of time and enormously gifted in every way, had youth at his command for one thousand years; he kept an eye on *kalās* and *kāsthās*;

9 He made love to the apsarā Viśvācī sometimes in the garden called Nandana, sometimes in Alakā, and sometimes on the high slopes of the mountain Meru.

10 When the dharmātmā lord of the earth realised that his time was over, he called Pūru to his side, and said to him:

11 "Son, foe-vanquisher,
I have enjoyed all I could,
To the best of my powers,
Everything, in all seasons.

12 Kāma never ends,
Kāma grows with feeding,
Like sacrificial flames
Lapping up ghee.

13 Become the sole lord of
The world's paddy-fields, wheat-fields,
Precious stones, beasts, women –
Still not enough.
Discard desire.

14 This disease kills. The wicked
Cannot give it up, old age
Cannot lessen it. True happiness
Lies in controlling it.

15 For one thousand years,
My mind lusted for pleasures.
Now, instead of resting,
I lust for more pleasure.

16 I must overcome it!
Fixing my thoughts on Brahman
Cultivating detachment, I
Will live with the gentle forest deer.

17 Pūru, my son, I am pleased with you.
Take back your youth, take
My kingdom. May you prosper!
You have taught me a loving lesson."

18 Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, took back his old age, and Pūru, his son, recovered his youth.

19 And Yayāti was eager to install his youngest son Pūru on the throne. But all the four castes of his kingdom, headed by Brahmins, protested.

20 "Your majesty, how can you instal Pūru on the throne, bypassing your eldest son – Yadu, Devayānī's son, Śukra's grandson.

21 Yadu is your eldest son; after him, Turvasu; then were born Śarmiṣṭhā's sons, Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru.

22 Iis it proper for you to ignore the rights of the elder sons and choose the youngest? Our considered opinion is – you should act according to the dictates of dharma."

23 "Listen to me, all of you belonging to the four castes, led by Brahmins," said Yayāti. "I will explain why my kingdom should not go to my eldest son.

24 My eldest son disobeyed me. All wise men agree that a son who disobeys his father is no son at all.

25 The true son is he who obeys his father and mother, who is dutiful, who loves them, and is always seeking their welfare.

26 There is a hell full of sorrows called *put*. A son is called *putra* because he saves his parents from that hell.

27 A son is ordained to offer pūjā to gods, ṛṣis and pitṛs. Only that son is the eldest who has a multitude of merits.

28 Only such a meritorious son deserves a share in this world and the world after this. Only that son who is meritorious deserves to be known as the best of one's sons – no one else. A son without merits is no son at all.

29 It is because of a son that those who are wise in dharma speak of the dharma of one's pitṛs.

30 Yadu and Turvasu slighted me; Druhyu and Anu treated me flippantly.

31 Only Pūru listened to me. I was respected and honoured by him. He accepted my old age. He is the youngest, yet he deserves to be king.

32 Pūru is my friend – he did what pleased me. Besides, I was granted this privilege by the son of Kavi, Śukra himself –

33 To make the son who obeyed me the rājā of my subjects. I submit to you, therefore, that Pūru should receive the crown."

34 The people said, "It is true, O king, that the son who is gifted and seeks his parents' welfare, deserves to be honoured, though he may be the youngest.

35 Pūru has sought your welfare, and deserves the kingdom. And since Śukra himself has instructed to this effect, we have nothing against it."

36 Finding his subjects agreeable, the son of Nahuṣa installed his son Pūru on the throne.

37 He left the kingdom in Pūru's care and, resolving to live in the forest, set out from his capital, accompanied by Brahmins and ṛṣis.

38 Yadu's sons were called the Yādavas, Turvasu's sons the Yavanas, Druhyu's Bhojas, Anu's Mlecchas;

39 And the sons of Puru were known as the Pauravas – the dynasty in which you, rājā Janamejaya, were born to rule for a thousand years.

SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 Installing his son Pūru on the throne (continued Vaiśampāyana), rājā Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, adopted the life of retirement-in-the-forest, and passed his days as a muni.

2 He lived with Brahmins, observed strict vows, and subsisted on roots and fruits. Patiently leading a life of privation, he passed away and found heaven.

3 In heaven, he lived in felicity, till Śakra-Indra hurled him down.

4 I have heard that instead of plummeting down, he was arrested in mid-space.

5 I have also heard that, after some time, rājā Yayāti again found heaven, this time in the company of illustrious ascetis like Vasumat, Aṣṭaka, Pratardana and Śibi.

6 "But why was he hurled down from heaven?" asked Janamejaya. "Why was he again admitted? I want to know the whole story in detail.

7 Recite it to all the assembled Brahmins and Brahmarṣis here. Yayāti, lord of the earth, was like the rājā of the gods;

8 He fathered the prolific Kuru dynasty; he shone like the sun. He was a world-famous mahā-atmaned man of splendid accomplishments. I would like to know all about his life on earth and in heaven."

9 Vaiśampāyana said : I will recite to you the excellent history of king Yayāti's exploits on earth and in heaven.

This sacred story destroys the ill effects
Of the misdeeds of all who hear it.

10 Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa, installed his son Pūru on the throne and retired to the forest joyfully.

11 He overrode the claims of his other sons, spcially the eldest Yadu; he chose to subsist, in the forest, on fruits and roots.

12 He tamed his mind and senses;
He pleased the pitṛs and gods
By yajñas; he poured libations
Required of *vānaprastha*-dwellers.

13 Guests and stangers
Who came to him received
Fruits of the forest and yajña leftovers.
He subsisted on cast-away corn-seeds.

14 One thousand years passed like this,
His mind under complete control,
Maintaining a vow of silence;
One full year in fasting,

15 Living on air, not sleeping.
Another year with five yajña-fires
Around him, and the sun
Overhead. And six months

16 Standing on one leg.
Finally, doer-of-holy-deeds
Yayāti ascended to heaven,
Amidst universal acclaim.

SECTION EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 In heaven (Vaiśampāyana went on), the Indra-among-rājās Yayāti was honoured by the gods, Sādhyas, Maruts, and Vasus.

2 The doer-of-holy-deeds frequently went from the region of the gods to the abode of Brahmā. It is said that he dwelt in heaven for a very long time.

3 One day Yayāti, best of kings, went to Śakra-Indra. They talked for a while, and Indra asked:

4 "Rājā, what did you tell Pūru when he took your old age and when you handed him over the kingdom ?"

5 Yayāti replied:
"I told him: Of the whole area
Between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā,
The central region of the earth,
You are the rājā. Your brothers have the fringes.

6 I said:
Shun meanness, deceit, anger.
Shun crookedness, malice, enmity.

7 A wise man never insults
Father, mother, learned man, a man of tapasyā,
A humble and gentle person.

8 A strong man accepts and absorbs.
An insecure man cultivates anger.
When the wicked hate the good,
The weak hate the strong,

9 The ugly hate the handsome.
When the poor hate the wealthy,
The incompetent the accomplished,
When doers of adharma hate doers of dharma,
The untalented the talented –
These O Śakra-Indra,
Are signs of the Kali-Yuga.

10 I told him: Men without anger
Are superior to men with anger,
Forgiving greater than unforgiving.
Man excels beast; learned excel unlearned.

11 Though wronged, do not wrong.
Anger, not curbed, devours
The angry man. Anger, curbed
Adds lustre to the good man.

12 Never wound with cruel words.
Never win by wrong means.
Never speak words that burn
And afflict others. Only ill-doers do so.

13 There's a monster in the man's mouth
Whose words are like thorns.
Lakṣmī the goddess of prosperity deserts whoever
So much as looks on a cruel speaker.

14 Look up to the good man.
Compare yourself to him.
Compare your deeds to good deeds.
Ignore the words of the wicked.

15 Tears all day and night for him
Whose lips hold arrows of cruel speech,
Arrows which pierce the human heart.
Wise men never shoot such arrows.

16 Nothing better in the three worlds
To worship gods with
Than kindness and friendship,
Charity and sweet speech.

13 Let your words be sweet,
Let them give pleasure, not pain
Offer pūjā-respect to the pūjā-respect worthy.
Give more than you receive."

SECTION EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 Indra said: "And then, O son of Nahuṣa, having discharged all your royal obligations, you left the palace and retired to the forest. Tell me, O rājā, who comes closest to you in tapasyā.

2 Yayāti replied:

"I find none, O Vāsava-Indra,
among men, gods, gandharvas,
and even mahā-ṛṣis to equal me
in tapasyā."

3 Indra said:

"Without knowing their merits,
you belittle your superiors,
your equals, and your inferiors.
Your excellence needs humbling.
You will fall from heaven, O rājā.

4 Yayati replied:

"If my excellence needs humbling, for belittling
Śakra-Indra, gods, ṛṣis, gandharva and humans,
grant at least that I fall
among the virtuous and honest."

5 Indra said:

"You will fall, O king,
among the virtuous and honest.
Remember in future never to slight
superiors, equals, or inferiors."

6 So he fell (continued Vaiśampāyana)
from the holy regions;
as he fell, Aṣṭaka, rājarṣi,
dharma-saviour, saw him and said:

7 "Who are you, O youth,
falling in the sky,
handsome like Indra,
shining in self-splendour?
Who are you
falling like the sun falling,
scattering masses of clouds
as it falls?

8 As you fall
from the shining realms,
fire-refulgent,
men stand and ask
Who falls?
and fall in a faint.

9 Śakra-Indra!
Arka-Sūrya!
Viṣṇu!
We come
before you
to know the truth.

10 Had you asked first
who we were,
we would not be uncivil
and ask as we do now,
Who are you, O handsome one?
Why do you fall here?

11 Indra-shining hero!
Cast aside your fears,
forget your sorrows –
We are the virtuous and wise;
even Sakra-Indra, slayer of Bala,
cannot harm you here.

12 The honest and the virtuous
are the mainstay of their fellows.
O Indra-shining hero,
you see here the guardians
of the moving and unmoving world.
You are safe now.

13 Agni is the lord
of heat;
Earth is the lord
of seeds;
Sūrya is the lord
of light;
A guest is the lord
of the honest and the virtuous."

SECTION EIGHTY-NINE

1 Yayati said:

"I am Yayāti,
son of Nahuṣa,
father of Pūru.
I fall from heaven,
my excellence humbled
for slighting my fellowmen.

2 I am older than you,
so I did not greet you
first. It is said
that he who is older
or superior in learning
is revered by the twice-born."

3 Aṣṭaka said:

"According to you, O rājā,
a man old in years
deserves instant respect.
Only those who are superior
in learning or tapasyā
are worthy of reverence."

4 Yayāti replied:

"Ill deeds cancel good deeds.
Pride is the road to hell.
Virtue should shun wickedness.

5 Virtue should seek virtue's increase.
I was virtuous once –
All gone – irrecoverable.
Be wise and virtuous – learn from me.

6 Who finds heaven? –
He who has wealth yet does yajña,
He who is learned yet humble,
He who, knowing the Vedas, does tapasyā.

7 Shun pride of wealth,
Shun vanity of Veda-wisdom.
Men are many, fate is final.
Power, effort, are vain and useless.
Destiny is the lord – remember this,
And shun pride, and cast off grief.

8 Fate is final.
Happiness and sorrow depend on destiny.
Fate is all-powerful, one's effort is pitiful.

9 The wise are always serene,
Not sorrowing in sorrow, not rejoicing in joy.
Fate is final. Destiny is the lord:
Sorrowing and rejoicing are futile.

10 O Aṣṭaka, I do not fear fear,
I do not grieve over grief.
I am what I am,
What the Great Ordainer made me.

11 Insects, worms, oviparous creatures,
Vegetables, crawling animals, vermin,
Fish, stone, grass, wood –
All life, whatever's created –
Freed from destiny, merge with Prakṛti.

12 Happiness and sorrow come and go.
I know this, Aṣṭaka, so why should I grieve?
How is one to know how to act
    to avoid misery?
So, grief is useless;
    no point grieving."

13 Steady in dharma is he
who does not grieve in sorrow,
who does not exult in happiness.
Destiny is the lord,
Nothing upsets me.'"

14 Aṣṭaka's materned grandfather
Yayāti,
Possessor of all guṇas, said this,
suspended in mid-air.

15 Aṣṭaka asked:
"Indra of the earth, tell me
in detail of those regions
which you visited, and
where you passed blissful days.
Tell me how long, O rājā,
you lived in such bliss."

16 Yayāti replied:
"A great rājā on earth,
I ruled the entire world.
My virtues brought me high newards.
I lived a thousand years on earth,
at the end of which period
I ascended to a high realm –

17 The exquisite abode of Indra.
It has a thousand gates,
its circumference is a thousand yojanas.
Here I lived another thousand years,
at the end of which period
I ascended to a higher realm –

18 That of Prajāpati, lord of the earth,
a realm of great felicity,
a difficult realm to attain.
even for the lokapāla
guardians of the four quarters.
Here I lived a thousand years,
at the end of which period
I ascended to a higher realm –

19 The abode of the god of gods,
where I lived blissfully many years.
I have lived in many realms,
Offered pūjā by the gods,
I shone like the gods,
I was powerful like the gods.

20 I could assume any form at will,
for millions of years I made love
to apsarās in the Nandana-gardens,
under clustering, graceful trees
ornamented with flowers
shedding sacred scent upon us.

21 Oh, for many years I lived there,
in celestial happiness.
Then a fearful-faced messenger of the gods
came and shouted loudly, thrice:
Lost! Lost! Lost!

22 And I fell from Nandana.
That is all I remember.
My merits are all gone.
O lion-like rājā,
I hear gods' voices
in the sky, wailing;

23 *Aho! what a downfall!*
Virtuous Yayāti falling,
all his merits scattered!
As I fell, I asked,
'Where are the good ones
among whom I am to fall?'

24 And they pointed to this region
which belongs to you. I saw
puffs of smoke rising
from the yajña-places
and I smelt ghee-perfume,
and in joy I came here."

SECTION NINETY

1 "Foremost of those living in the Kṛta-yuga," Aṣṭaka said, "you could assume any shape at will, and you passed a million years in the Nandana gardens. Who forced you out of that happy region?"

2 Yayāti replied:
"As, in this world relatives and friends
desert a man who has lost all his wealth,
in that world Indra and the gods
forsake the man whose merits are exhausted."

3 "How do merits get exhausted in the other world?" asked Aṣṭaka. "What deeds get men what worlds? Tell me, for you know all."

4 Yayāti replied:
"O most like a god,
those who boast of their goodness
are doomed to an earthly hell.
They look emaciated, but are fat food
for vultures, dogs, and jackals
who roam the earth.

5 Cast off all that's wicked and condemnable.
That is all I have to say. O Indra-among-men.
What else would you like to know?"

6 Aṣṭaka said:
"When age ends life,
Vultures, blue-necked peacocks,
Insects and worms
Feast on the human body –
What happens to a man then?
Is he born again?
I have heard of no earthly hell."

7 Yayāti replied:
"When the body crumbles,
Man's karma makes him re-enter
His mother's womb – indistinct
At first, then distinct, visible,
Embodied, he walks on earth.
This is the earthly hell
Which seems to offer no release.

8 Some fall like this,
After sixty thousand years in the sky,
Some after eighty thousand –
But they fall; and the rākṣāsas
Of earth, sharp-toothed, devour them."

9 Aṣṭaka asked :
"Why do these rākṣasas,
Fearful and sharp-toothed,
Attack fallen men? Why
Are fallen men not annihilated?
How do they re-enter wombs?"

10 Yayāti replied:
"What falls from heaven, O king,
Becomes subtle essence in water;
Water becomes sperm, sperm creates life
In woman's womb after her period;

11 Grows into foetus; and life is born
Like fruit from flower. In trees,
Plants, vegetables, water, air, earth, space,
From water-seed came quadrupeds and bipeds."

12 Aṣṭaka asked:
"Does a creature with human form
Enter human wombs, or others? Explain this to me.

13 How do eyes, ears, feeling grow in the womb?
Tāta, respected one, I ask you this. You are wise."
Yayāti replied:

14 "Vayu the wind
the life-force
pushes the flower-rasa semen
into the yoni of the womb
during the fertile period.
A human being
in latent form
develops in the womb.

15 He grows in the embryo briefly.
Flesh grows around him.
He comes out of the womb,
He grows conscious of his existence;

He has ears which hear,
Eyes which see colour and form,

16 Nose that smells, tongue that tastes,
Body that thrills, mind that thinks.
Such is the growth, O Aṣṭaka,
Of life in mahā-ātmaned life-forms."

17 Aṣṭaka asked :
"After death, the body is burnt,
Buried, or floated away in water.
Nothing remains of it.
What happens to the ātman then?"

18 Yayāti replied:
"O lion-among-kings, a man dies,
But his subtle essence remains;
He remembers good karma, bad karma,
As if in a dream; swifter than wind,
He assumes a new body.

19 To virtuous wombs go the virtuous,
To wicked wombs the wicked.
The wicked ones become worms and insects.
That is all, O shining one.

20 I have explained to you
How quadrupeds, bipeds, and six-footed
Creatures are born; O lion-among-rājās,
What else would you like to know?"

21 Aṣṭaka asked:
"*Tāta*! Respected one!
'How does a man achieve
Those higher regions from where
There is no return? By knowledge
Or tapasyā? How does one achieve
Supreme bliss? Tell me this."

22 Yayāti replied:
"The wise say: Seven massive gates,
Tapasyā, charity, serenity,
Self-control, modesty, simplicity,
And compassion for all creatures
Lead to heaven.
Pride cancels all these. So the wise say.

23 The man who acquires knowledge,
And proud of his knowledge, uses knowledge
To belittle others, never gets heaven,
Never gets the fruits of Brahmā.

24 Study, control of speech
Agnihotr, performance of yajña –
These remove fear. Mixed with pride,
These four create fear.

25 When honoured,
The wise are not proud;
When insulted,
The wise are not depressed.
Only the wise
honour the wise;
The wicked hardly ever
honour the wise.

26 'I gave so much,
I performed many yajñas,
I am learned,
I keep my vows' –
All vanity, all pride.
Fearful.
Give it up, absolutely.

27 Only they who have faith
in the Unchangeable One the Ancient One,
the Inconceivable One
Who showers blessings on the virtuous
(like you, O king) –
Only they find peace
in this world and the world-after-this."

SECTION NINETY-ONE

1 Aṣṭaka said:
"Those learned in the Vedas
Have different opinions on the way
Brahmācārīs, gṛhasthas, bhikṣus and vānaprasthas
Should conduct themselves
In accordance with dharma."

2 Yayāti replied:
"A brahmacārī muni, living
in his guru's house, studies
at the guru's convenience,
anticipates his guru's needs,
rises before his guru does,
and sleeps after him; he is humble,
patient, alert, and studious.

3 A householder performs yajñas only
with honestly-earned wealth;
he should spend it in charity,
be hospitable to all guests,
never take anything unless given.
This is the householder's upaniṣad.

4 One who renounces should live in a forest,
depend on himself for sustenance,
abstain from vice, eschew violence,
give freely and with compassion,
never inflict the least pain on others.
Only then can he find peace.

5 The true bhikṣu is accomplished,
completely self-disciplined, detached
from worldly ties, does no manual labour,
does not sleep under a householder's roof,
is celibate, and travels over large areas,
covering a little distance every day.

6 When hankering after pleasures
is overcome –
that very night should
a man proceed
to the forest where he
should control himself
and meditate
on the ātman.

7 When a man in his vānaprastha
dies in the forest, his ancestors,
his grandchildren (up to ten generations
including himself) blend in the Divine Essence."

8 Aṣṭaka asked:
"How many kinds of munis are there,
how many observers of the vow of silence?
Tell me, illustrious one."

9 Yayati replied:
"Who lives in a forest
and leaves the village behind him;
Or lives in a village
and leaves forest behind him,
is a muni."

10 Aṣṭaka said:
"To live in a forest
and leave the village,
To live in a village
and leave the forest –
how is this possible?"

11 Yayāti replied:
"A muni withdraws from the village
and lives in the forest.
He does not seek the things of the village,
he has left the village behind.

12 A muni gives up household, fire,
gotra, Vedic study.

13 A lion-cloth is his only need,
and food to barely keep him alive.
He lives in a village, and leaves the forest behind.

14 His passions controlled,
his desires abandoned,
his actions surrendered,
he finds fulfilment in the vow of silence.

15 Who will not revere
the eater of simple food,
the non-injuring one,
the holy-hearted one,
the ascetic-merited one,
the abstainer from violence
even when violence is sanctioned by dharma?

16 Emaciated by penance,
Reduced to flesh and bone,
Such a muni
Conquers not only this world,
But also the world-after-this.

17 Locked in his vow of silence,
Meditating, he transcends
Happiness and sorrow,
Honour and insult – he
Has conquered this world,
He has conquered the world-after-this.

18 He eats food like cattle do,
This muni, like beasts do,
Wherever he finds it, and
Without sensually relishing it –
For he has conquered the world,
He is worthy of amṛta
The nectar of non-death."

SECTION NINETY-TWO

1 Aṣṭaka said:
"Who of the two, ascetic and man of knowledge –
both exerting like the sun and the moon,
is the first to reach the realm of Brahmā?"

2 Yayāti replied:
"The man of knowledge finds Brahmā first.
He is self-controlled, though he lives
among worldly men with multifarious desires.

3 The ascetic, devoted to strict tapasyā,
takes time to acquire knowledge; knowledge
alone takes a man beyond life's duality.

4 But the ascetic's efforts are not wasted.
Though he fail of fulfilment in this life,
he finds the merits added to his next.

5 Only the man of knowledge finds samādhi.
He sees the Unity of Being; though immersed
in the sensual world, he remains unaffected."

6 Aṣṭaka said:
"You are young, O rājā.
You are handsome.
You wear divine garlands.
You shine.
From where have you come?
Where are you going?
Whose messenger are you?
Are you going to earth?

7 Yayāti replied:
"I have lost my merits.
When I stop answering your questions,
I will fall into bhauma naraka,
the earthly hell.
Even now I heard the lokapālas,
regents of the universe,
commanding me to go.

8 Yet I have a boon from Śakra-Indra:
Though I fall, me I will fall
among the wise and virtuous."

9 Aṣṭaka said:
"I am convinced, O king,
that you know everything of dharma.
Tell me: is there a place for me
in heaven or in the sky?
For if there is,
you will not fall."

10 Yayāti replied :
"Indeed there is. There are many regions
for you to enjoy in heaven,
as many as earth's cattle and horses,
as many as the animals in the forests."

11 Aṣṭaka said:
"Then I give you all of them, O Indra-among-rājās,
all the regions in heaven that are mine.
Take them: and do not fall.
Take them now: let your sorrow cease."

12 Yayāti replied:
"Only Brahman-knowing Brahmins
are entitled to take gifts,
not men like me. I also gave
many gifts to many Brahmins.

13 Let no man not a Brahmin,
let no woman, wife of a hero,
invite blame by taking gifts.
On earth I was devoted to virtue.
How can I do now
what I have never done before?"

14 And Pratardana said:
"I am Pratardana, O king.
because you know everything,
tell me : is there a place for me
in heaven or sky to enjoy my karma?"

15 Yayāti replied:
"Indeed there is. Many regions,
sun-incandescent, blissful,
are yours. Live seven days in each,
and they will never end."

16 Pratardana said:
"Then I give you all of them,
the regions in heaven or sky that are mine.
Take them: and do not fall.
Take them now: let your sorrow cease."

17 Yayati said:
"No king, another's equal in prowess,
should accept as a gift
what the other earned by yogic penance.
No king should take advantage,

18 No matter how downfallen. A king
should pursue dharma, and increase his fame.
I am a king, I know my dharma:
do not ask me to do anything ignoble.

19 Others, seeking religious merit,
do not accept gifts.
Why should I do
what others do not do?

20 Only that rājā who knows
dharma and adharma
and can discriminate
between what is duty
and what is not duty
can be called wise
and devoted to truth.
His authority makes him
the world-guardian
the Loka-pālā.

When a choice has to be made
between dharma
and artha and kāma,
let dharma come first."

21 Yayati had hardly finished saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana) when Vasumanas addressed him.

SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 Vaiśampāyana said:
"I am Vasumanas, Uṣadaśvas son.
You are learned in the dharma of karma.
Tell me: is there any place for me
in heaven or sky to enjoy myself?"

2 Yayāti replied:
"Indeed there is. Immense regions,
sky-vast, on earth and the ten points
of heaven, sun-illuminated,
are all waiting for you."

3 Vasumanas said :
"Then I give you all of them, O rājā,
the regions that are mine are all yours.
If you do not wish to take a gift,
buy them of me with a piece of straw."

4 Yayāti said:
"I do not remember I ever bought
or sold anything unfairly.
I do not think other kings did so either.
Why should I do it?"

5 Vasumanas said:
"If you think buying is improper,
take them as a gift.
I vow here: I shall never dwell
in those regions. They are yours."

6 And Śibi said:
"I am Śibi, Uśinara's son
You are learned in the dharma of karma.
Tell me: is there any place for me
in heaven or sky to enjoy myself?"

7 Yayāti replied:
"You never spurned in speech or thought
good men who sought your help."

8 Śibi said:
"If you think buying is improper,
I give them to you as gifts.
I vow here: I shall never dwell
in those regions of the unsorrowing wise."

9 Yayāti replied:
"You have well deserved, O Śibi, O god-among-men,
the infinite worlds that are your reward.
I cannot enjoy worlds earned by others.
So I cannot take your offer."

10 Aṣṭaka said:
"Each of us has offered to give
regions acquired by us with our virtue.
You have refused all. They are yours, O rājā.
We return now to our earth-hell."

11 Yayati said:
"You love truth, and you are wise.
Tell me what I ought to do.
I cannot do now
what I have never done before."

12 Aṣṭaka said:
"These five golden chariots I see –
whose are they? Do men ride on them
when they set their goal
on the region of eternal bliss?

13 Yayāti said:
"These are golden chariots,
fire-dazzling, lustrous;
they will take you
to the regions of bliss."

14 Just then Yayāti's daughter,
rich-in-tapasyā Mādhavī,
came there.
She was dressed in deerskin.
She had taken the Deer Vow

15 In her old age :
to live with deer,
to eat and play with deer.
She entered the place of yajña
with a flock of deer.
Surprised

16 By the fragrant smoke
of the yajña-fire,
she roamed about
in the sacred enclosure.
Her never-defeated invincible sons –

17 She saw them and was happy.
Happy also was Mādhavī
with the grandeur of the yajña.
She saw Nahuṣa's son
her father Yayāti there,
suspended above the earth.

18 She paid her respects to her father.
Vasumanas said to his ascetic mother:
"Mother!
Among ladies the most excellent!
You paid your respects to him.
Who is he? A god? A rājā?
If you know, tell me."

19 Mādhavī said: "My sons!
Listen to me.
He is my father,
Nahuṣa's son Yayāti,
Your maternal grandfather.

20 Placing my brother Pūru
on the throne,
he went to heaven.
I do not know why
such a mahā-illustrious person
is now back here."

21 Vasumanas said:
"He has been rejected,
so he is here."
Dismayed by her son's words,

22 Mādhavī said to her father.
ringed by his grandsons:
"The worlds I have attained
by my tapasyā – take them!
The wealth of one's sons
and one's daughter's sons,
if acquired by dharma,

23 According to Veda-wise ṛṣis,
belongs to oneself –
so take the gift of our tapasyā –
a wealth which is yours –
and go to heaven."

24 Yayati said: "If this is the fruit
of dharma, I will take it.
I have been saved
by my daughter
and the mahā-ātmaned sons
of my daughter.

25 From today, supremely precious
and pure will be the śrāddha
offerings of a daughter's sons.
They will delight
the spirits of one's ancestors.

26 These sets of three
are required for a śrāddha:
daughter's sons, noon time, *tila* scsame seed;
absence of anger, purity,
absence of impatience;

27 meal-taker, meal-server,
and listeners;
the eighth part of a day
is *kutapa,* noon time,
when heat begins declining;
the food-offering to pitṛs
at that time
is undeteriorating;

28 *tila* sesame seed
protects from *piśāca* ogres,
kutapa kusha grass
saves from rākṣasas.
Listeners protect the caste,
and mendicants feasting
make the śrāddha undecaying.

29 A strict-vowed learned man
determines the right time
for the śrāddha."

Yayāti continued,
telling his grandsons:
"You have finished
your purifying avabhṛta bath
Let us proceed."

30 Aṣṭaka said:
"Then take these golden chariots and go
to heaven, O king.
We will wait.
We will follow."

31 Yayāti said:
"Let us go together,
Bliss is for all of us.
Look, the lustrous path
to bliss is visible."

32 The entire skyey region (continued Vaiśampāyana) shone with the refulgent dharma of the kings as they climbed into their chariots and prepared to enter the regions of bliss.

33 Aṣṭaka said:
"I thought I was mahātmā Indra's friend,
I would enter heaven first.
How is it that Śibī, Uśinara's son,
has left us all behind?"

34 Yayāti said:
"Uśinara's son gave all he had
to achieve the region of Brahmā.
He is the best among you.
His munificence, tapasyā,

35 Truth-speaking, dharma, humility,
auspiciousness, fortitude, gentleness,
and desire to do good are so great, O rājā,
that none can measure them."

36 Aṣṭaka, impelled by curiosity, asked his maternal grandfather, lustrous like Indra, "Tell me truly. I am curious. Who are you? Tell me, whose son? No Brahmin or Ksatriya has ever done what you have done."

37 Yayāti replied:
"This is the truth: I am Yayāti,
son of Nahuṣa, and father of Pūru.
And earth's overlord. You are my kinsmen.
I am your maternal grandfather.

38 I conquered the earth;
fed and clothed Brahmins,
Who gifts one hundred horses,
and gets venerated like a god.

39 I gave away to Brahmins all the earth:
cattle, elephants, horses, gold,
and other wealth; ten crores
of excellent milch cows.

40 Sky and earth stand
because of
truth
Fire burns
because of
truth.
Never once
did I
speak a word not true.
Be like the wise: love and worship truth.

41 O Aṣṭaka, all that I have told you,
Pratardana, and Vasumanas,
is truth. Because the worlds, munis and gods
love truth, they are worthy of pūjā.

42 And who reads to the unenvious twice-born
this story of our heaven-ascension,
he shall also
be with us in the regions of bliss."

43 Saying this mahātmā rājā Yayāti, redeemed by his kinsmen, ascended to heaven (said Vaiśampāyana). He left the earth and filled the three worlds with the glory of his karma.

SECTION NINETY-FOUR

1 "Bhagavan, revered sir," said Janamejaya, "I would like to hear the history of the royal descendants of Pūru – the prowess and achievements of each of them.

2 They tell me that in the dynasty of Pūru not a single king lacked character and prowess. There was no king who did not have sons.

3 Tell me, O you whose wealth is tapasyā, in detail about all these rājās, all of great learning and accomplishment."

4 Vaiśampāyana replied : Since you ask me I will tell you the history of the entire dynasty. All the Pūrus were like Indra himself; they were affluent; they were blessed with every auspicious gift.

5 By his wife Pauṣṭī, Pūru had three mahā-chariot-warriors – Pravīra, Iśvara, and Raudrāśva. Of these, Pravīra continued the Pūru line.

6 Pravīra and his wife Śūrasenī had a son, Manasyu. Lotus-eyed Manasyu was lord of the entire earth, bounded by the four oceans.

7 Manasyu and his wife Sauvīrī had three sons – Śakta, Saṁhanana, and Vāgmin, all great heroes and mahā-chariot-warriors.

8 Wise and virtuous Raudrāśva had ten excellent archers as sons by the apsarā Miśrakeśī.

9 They were great heroes, all of them, and performed many yajñas to the gods; they were skilled in the śāstras, all followers of dharma. All had sons.

10 They were : Ṛceyu, Kaksayu, powerful Kṛkaneyu, Sthaṇḍileyu, Vaneyu, the mahā-illustrious Jaleyu,

11 Mighty and intelligent Tejeyu, Indra-like Satyeyu Dharṃeyu and god-like Saṃnateyu.

12 Ṛceyu became the sole lord of the earth and was known by the name of Anādhṛṣti. He was truly like Vāsava-Indra himself.

13 Anādhṛṣti had a son, Matināra, a supremely dharma-following rājā who performed both the aśvamedha and rājasuya sacrifices.

14 Matināra had four mahā-valiant sons : Taṁsu, Mahān, Atiratha, and the incomparably illustrious Druhu.

15 Of these, Taṁsu was the continuer of Pūru's line. He subjugated the whole earth and earned great glory.

16 Taṁsu had a powerful son called Īlina, who became the foremost of conquerors and brought the entire world under his sway.

17 Īlina and his wife Rathantari had five sons, Dusyanta being the eldest. They were as mighty as the five elements.

18 The five were : Duṣyanta, Śūra, Bhīma, Pravasu and Vasu. The eldest, Duṣyanta, became the rājā.

19 Duṣyanta and his wife Śakuntalā had a learned son, Bharata, who became king and founded the famed Bharata dynasty.

20 Bharata had nine sons by his three wives. None was like the father, and Bharata was disappointed in all of them.

21 The mothers, incensed, killed all their sons. The procreations of Indra-among-men Bharata thus turned out to be fruitless.

22 So Bharata performed many great yajñas and, by the grace of Bharadvāja, obtained a son named Bhumanyu.

23 And, satisfied that at least he really had a deserving son, the descendant of Pūru installed him as his heir-apparent.

24 Bhumanyu had six sons by his wife Puṣkariṇī: Suhotra, Suhota, Suhavi, Suyaju,

25 Ṛcika and Diviratha. The eldest, Suhotra, became ruler of the whole world.

26 He performed many rājasuyas and aśvamedhas; he controlled the entire earth bounded by the four oceans

27 And rich with all manner of wealth – cattle, horses, gems, gold.

28 It seemed as if the earth
Sank, under the profusion
Of men, horses, elephants, and chariots.
Suhotra ruled
With dharma over his kingdom.

29 The surface of the earth
Was studded with sacrificial stakes
During his reign – hundreds
Of thousands of them.
Everywhere was fertile corn,
Everywhere happy human beings.

30 O descendant of Bharata, lord-of-the-earth Suhotra had three sons by his wife Aikṣvākī : Ajamīḍha, Sumīḍha, and Purumīḍha.

31 The eldest Ajamīḍha continued the royal line by having six sons by his three wives.

32 By Dhūminī he had Ṛkṣa, by Nīlī Duṣyanta and Parameṣṭhin, and by Keśinī he had Jahnu, Vrajana, and Rūpiṇa.

33 The Pāñcālas are all descended from Duṣyanta and Parameṣṭhin; and the Kuśikas are all descendants of refulgent Jahnu.

34 Ṛkṣa was elder to Vrajana and Rupiṇa. His son was Saṁvarana, who kept alive the royal line.

35 O rājā Janamejaya! We have heard that when Saṁvaraṇa, son of Ṛkṣa, was ruling the earth, a great calamity overtook his kingdom;

36 Famine, plague, drought, disease laid it waste and his subjects suffered grievously.

37 Organised enemy forces attacked and routed the armies of the Bharata princes; and marching in all four directions,

38 The armies of the Pāñcālas set out to conquer the earth. With ten akṣauhiṇis of soldiers, the king of the Pāñcālas defeated the Bhārata princes.

39 And out of fear King Saṁvaraṇa fled to safety, taking with him his wife, sons, ministers and relatives.

40 He sought shelter in a forest on the banks of the river Sindhu; the forest extended to the slopes of a mountain.

41 Secure in that citadel the Bhāratas lived there many years. One thousand years passed.

42 One day the ṛṣi Bhagavān Vasiṣṭha visited them. They came out to receive and honour him.

43 They offered him *arghya*, welcomed him reverently, and told him everything.

44 When the resplendent rsi had seated himself, the rājā personally requested him: "Be our purohita. Help us regain our kingdom."

45 Vasiṣṭha intoned "*Aum*". I have heard that Vasiṣṭha helped Saṁvaraṇa re-conquer his kingdom,

46 And the entire earth. I have heard that he made Saṁvaraṇa supreme lord of the Kṣatriya race, and installed him king in his own capital.

47 Whereupon king Saṁvaraṇa began to exact tribute from all the kings of the world. The mahā-powerful son

48 Of Ajamīḍha performed many magnificent yajñas and lavished many gifts on Brahmins. By his wife Tapatī, daughter of Sūrya, he had a son named Kuru.

49 Kuru was a devotee of dharma. The people installed him as king. It is after him that the region known as Kurujāṅgala has become famous.

50 That great rāja-ṛṣi made Kuruksetra holy by his mahā-tapasyā there. Asvavān, Abhiṣyanta, Caitraratha, Muni,

51 And illustrious Janamejaya were his five sons by his intelligent queen, Vāhinī.

52 Aśvavān, known as Āvikṣit, had eight mighty sons: Parī kṣit, powerful Śabala, Adirāja, Virāja, heroic Śalmali,

53 Uccaiḥśravas, Bhaṅgakāra and Jitāri. And in his race were born, as the result of virtuous karma, seven mighty chariot-heroes, Janamejaya being the greatest of them all.

54 Parīkṣit's sons were skilled in dharma and artha. Their names were Kakṣasena, Ugrasena, mighty Citrasena,

55 Indrasena, Suṣeṇa and Bhimasena. The mahā-powerful sons of Janamejaya were famous all over the world.

56 Eldest among them was Dhṛtarāṣṭra; then Pāṇḍu, Bāhlīka, splendid Niṣadha, Jāmbunda,

57 Kuṇḍodara, Padāti, and Vasāti. All of them were conscientious in the discharge of duties relating to dharma and artha, and conducive to the general good.

58 Of these, Dhṛtarāstra became the rājā. He had eight sons: Kuṇḍika, Hastin, Vitarka, Krātha, Kuṇḍina,

59 Haviḥśravas, Indrābha, and invincible Bhumanyu. Only three of his sons became famous.

60 They were Pratīpa, Dharmanetra and Sunetra; and of these Pratīpa was acknowledged as the most excellent.

61 O best of Bharatas, Pratīpa had three sons : Devāpi, Śāntanu, and the great chariot-hero Bāhlika.

62 Devāpi chose to be an ascetic, because he sought the welfare of his brothers, and the kingdom came to Śantanu and the mahā chariot-warrior Bāhlīka.

63 Apart from these, there were born in the race of the Bharatas many noble kings shining like god-like ṛṣis.

64 And in this way, in the race of Manu, were born mahā-chariot-heroes resembling the gods themselves, and they brought lustre to the progeny of Ilā.

SECTION NINETY-FIVE

1 Janamejaya said : "I have heard from you, O Brahmin, the history of my ancestors. I have also heard about the illustrious rājās who belong to my dynasty.

2 And yet I am not satisfied by your marvellous account, because it is so brief. Give me all the particulars

3 Of this divine history, beginning with the Prajāpati Manu. No one can fail to be moved by such a wonderful account.

4 The fame of these mighty rulers straddles the three worlds, for they were wise, accomplished, noble, and full of dharma.

5 And this history that you recite is sweet as amrta to me; I cannot tire of listening to their prowess, strength, intelligence, munificence, virility and fortitude."

6 Vaiśaṃpāyana said:

Listen to this story, O rājā,
this story of your race:
I recite it exactly as I heard it
from island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.

7 From Dakṣa was born Aditi, from Aditi, Vivasvat; from Vivasvat, Manu; from Manu, Ilā; from Ilā, Pururavas; from Pururavas, Āyu; from Āyu, Nahuṣa; from Nahuṣa, Yayāti. Yayāti had two wives:

8 Usanas' daughter Devayānī, and Vrsaparva's daughter Śarmiṣṭhā. There's a sloka about this :

9 *Devayanī's sons were Yadu and Turvasu;*
Śarmiṣṭhā's sons were Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru.

10 *From Yadu came the Yādavas,*
From Pūru came the Pauravas.

11 Pūru's wife Kausalyā had a son, Janamejaya. Pūru performed three great aśvamedhas and the *viśvajit* world-conquest sacrifice before retiring to the forest.

12 Janamejaya married the princess of Madhu named Anantā, and had a son by her, Prācinvat, "Lord of the East"; he was given that title because in one day he conquered and annexed all the kingdoms of the east.

13 Prācinvat married Aśmakī of the Yādavas, and had a son by her named Saṁyāti.

14 Saṁyāti married Varaṅgi, daughter of the Yādava chief Dṛṣṭadvat, and had a son by her named Ahaṁyāti.

15 Ahaṃyāti married Bhānumatī, daughter of the Kṛtavīrya, and had a son by her named Sārvabhauma.

16 Sārvabhauma carried off and married the daughter of Kakeya, Sunandā, and had a son by her named Jayatsena.

17 Jayatsena married Suśravā, daughter of the king of Vidharbha, and had a son by her named Avācīna.

18 Avācīna married another Vidharbha princes, Maryādā, and had a son by her named Ariha.

19 Ariha married Āṅgi, and had a son by her named Mahābhauma.

20 Mahābhauma married Prasenjit's daughter Sayujñā, and had a son by her named Ayutanāyin; he was so called because he performed a sacrifice in which the fat of ten thousand human sacrifices was required, for "ayut" means ten thousand.

21 Ayutanāyin married Pṛthuśrava's daughter Kāmā, and had a son by her named Akrodhana.

22 Akrodhana married Karambhā, daughter of the king of Kaliṅga, and had a son her named Devātithi.

23 Devātithi married the princess of Videha, Maryādā, and had a son by her named Ariha.

24 Ariha married the princess of Aṅga, Sudevā, and had a son by her named Ṛkṣa.

25 Ṛkṣa married Takṣaka's daughter Jvālā, and had a son by her named Matinära.

26 Matinära performed the highly-meritorious twelve years' sacrifice on the banks of the Sarasvatī. When the sacrifice was over, Sarasvatī appeared in front of him and chose him as her husband. They had one son, Taṁsu.

27 Here is the sloka that describes Taṁsu's progeny :

Taṁsu was the son of Matināra by Sarasvatī,
Ilina was Taṁsu's son by the princess of Kaliṅga.

28 Īlina had five sons by his wife Rathantarī; the eldest of these was Duṣyanta.

29 Dusyanta married Śakuntalā, daughter of Viśvāmitra, and the son born to her was named Bharata.

30 Here are two ṣlokas describing the descendants of Bharata:

A mother,
Duśyanta,
Is flesh-sheath;
Just that.
The son
From her
Is the father.
Acknowledge
Your son.
Honour Śakuntalā.

31 *One's own son*
is one's own saviour
from death. Śakuntalā is right:
you are this boy's father.
you are his supporter.

32 He was called Bharata the Supporter for this reason. Bharata married Sunandā, daughter of Sarvasena, king of Kāśī; her son was called Bhumanyu.

33 Bhumanyu married Vijayā, daughter of Dāśārha, and her son was called Suhotra.

34 Suhotra married Suvarṇā, daughter of Ikṣvāku, and her son was Hasti, founder of this city Hastināpura.

35 Hasti married Yaśodharā, princess of Trigarta, and her son was named Vikuṇṭhana.

36 Vikuṇṭhana married Sudevā, princess of Dāśārha, and her son was named Ajamīḍha.

37 Ajamīḍha had four wives, Kaikeyī, Gāndhāri, Visalā, and Ṛkṣā. He had one hundred and twentyfour sons by them; the perpetuator of the line was Saṁvaraṇa.

38 Saṁvaraṇa married Tapatī, daughter of Vivasvat, and her son was Kuru.

39 Kuru married Śubhāṅgī, princess of Dāśārha, and her son was Vidūra.

40 Vidūra married Sāmpriyā, of the race of Madhu, and her son was Anaśvas.

41 Anaśvas married Amṛtā, daughter of the Magadha king, and her son was Parīkṣit.

42 Parīkṣit married Suyaśā, daughter of Bāhuda, and her son was Bhīmasena.

43 Bhīmasena married Kumārī, princess of Kekaya, and her son was Pratiśravas.

44 Pratiśravas' son was Pratīpa; Pratīpa married Sunandā, daughter of Śibi, and she had three sons, Devāpi, Śāntanu, and Bāhlīka.

45 Devāpi took up a hermit's life when still a boy; so Śāntanu became king.

46 Here is a śloka about Śāntanu:

Old men touched by this king's hands
Thrilled with serene ecstasy,
And were restored to youth at once.
Therefore is he Śāntanu, the Soothing and Healing One.

47 Śāntanu made Bhāgirathī Gaṅgā his wife, and had a son Devavrata, who afterwards became known as Bhīṣma, the Formidable Awe-Instilling One.

48 Bhīṣma, wishing his father's welfare, made him marry Satyavatī, also known as Gandhakālī.

49 Prior to marriage, virginal Satyavati had a son, Dvaipāyana, by Parāsara. Śāntanu had two sons by her.

50 Vicitravīrya and Citrāṅgada. Even before he attained youth, Citrāṅgada was killed by a Gandharva; so Vicitravīrya became king.

51 Vicitravīrya married the king of Kāśī's two daughters by Kausalyā – Ambikā and Ambālikā.

52 Vicitravīrya died childless. Satyavatī, afraid that the line of Duṣyanta would become extinct,

53 Thought of ṛṣi Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa. Mentally summoned by her, he arrived, stood before her, and said, "What is your wish?"

54 "Your brother Vicitravīrya," she said, "has died childless. Beget noble children for his sake."

55 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa replied, "So be it," and fathered three sons: Dhṛtārāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura.

56 Rājā Dhṛtārāṣṭra had one hundred sons by his wife Gāndhāri as a result of the boon granted him by ṛṣi Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.

57 Of these hundred, the famous were these: Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana, Vikarṇa and Citrasena.

58 Pāṇḍu had two wives who were like jewels: Kuntī, also called Pṛthā; and Mādrī.

59 One day Pāṇḍu, on a hunting expedition, saw a deer coupling with his mate. It was a ṛṣi in deer-form. He shot an arrow at the animal engaged in the act of pleasurable kāma-rasa.

60 Struck by the arrow, the beast changed into a rsi, who said to Pāṇḍu, "You who know the dharma of kāma-rasa – why did you have to kill me before my kāma-rasa was satisfied? Because you did so, you too will die in the act of kāma-rasa before you can satisfy your desire." Pāṇḍu heard this, and paled with fear, and would not go to his wives.

61 He told them, "It was my fault and I have been cursed. I am told there are no regions in the after-life for those who are childless. For my sake, have children." This last he said to Kuntī. And Kuntī had three children for the sake of Pāṇḍu: by Dharma she had Yudhiṣṭhira; by Maruta, Bhīma; by Śakra-Indra, Arjuna.

62 Pāṇḍu, greatly pleased, said: "Your co-wife is still childless; cause her to be a mother also."

63 Kuntī said, "It will be as you say," and passed her secret knowledge to Mādrī, who had twin sons, Nakula and Sahadeva, by the Aśvins.

64 One day Pāṇḍu saw Mādrī looking ravishingly beautiful in her dress and ornaments; desire stirred in him; he touched her, and he died.

65 Mādrī ascended his funeral pyre, saying to Kuntī, "Be gentle with my twin sons, who are now yours."

66 Some time after this, the Pāṇḍu princes and their mother Kuntī were taken by the ṛṣis to Hastināpura, and introduced to Bhīṣma and Vidura.

67 After introducing them to the rank and file of the citizens, the ascetics disappeared before their very eyes.

> Flowers fell from the sky,
> Celestial drums sounded, when
> The ascetics had finished.

68 The Pāṇḍavas were accepted. They mourned the death of their father, and performed his funeral rites, and stayed back, from their boyhood, Duryodhana had harboured ill will towards them.

69 Evil-minded Duryodhana, like a rākṣasa, tried in various ways to get rid of them; but what must be, will be.

70 Dhṛtarāṣṭra once persuaded them into going to Vāraṇāvata. They gladly went.

71 There an attempt was made to burn them alive in the lacquer-house; but Vidura alerted them, and they escaped.

72 They slew Hiḍimba, and came to Ekacakra.

73 In Ekacakra they encountered and slew the rākṣasa baka, and moved on to the city of the Pāñcālas.

74 There they married Draupadī, and returned to their own kingdom.

75 They prospered; they had many sons. Yudhiṣṭhira's son was Prativindhya, Bhīma's Sutasoma, Arjuna's Śrutakīrti, Nakula's Śatānīka, and Sahadeva's Śrutakarman.

76 At a svayamvara Yudhiṣṭhira obtained Devikā, daughter of king Govāsana of the Śaibyas, and had a son by her named Yaudheya.

77 Bhīma offered his valour as dower and obtained Balandharā, daughter of the king of Kāśi. He had a son by her named Sarvaga.

78 Arjuna went to Dvarākā and abducted the soft-speaking Subhadrā, sister of Vāsudeva-Krishna. He returned to Hastināpura and had a son by her, Abhimanyu, most accomplished, most loved by Vāsudeva-Krishna.

79 Nakula obtained as his wife Kareṇumatī, princess of Cedi, and his son by her was named Niramitra.

80 Sahadeva, in a svayamvara, obtained Vijayā, daughter of Dyutimat, king of Madra; his son by her was Suhotra.

81 And Bhīma had earlier a son, Ghaṭotkaca, by Hiḍimbā.

82 So these were the eleven sons of the Pāṇḍavas; of them Abhimanyu became the perpetuator of the dynasty.

83 He married Uttarā, daughter of king Virāṭa. She gave birth to a dead baby; Puruṣottama-Vāsudeva-Krishna ordered Kuntī to put the child in her lap, and said, "I will give life to this six-months' baby."

84 He was weak and shrunken because of his premature delivery and the effect of the fire-missile hurled at him; but Krishna gave him strength, valour, and prowess. And Krishna said, "Because this child is born in an extinct race, he shall be called Parīkṣit the Destroyed."

85 Parīkṣit married Mādravatī, your mother, and you, king Janamejaya, are his son.

86 You have two sons yourself by Vapuṣṭamā – Śatānīka and Śaṅkukarṇa. Śatānīka has a son Aśvamedhadatta by the daughter of the king of Videha.

87 This is the history of the lineage of Pūru and the Pāṇḍavas.

It is sacred,
It is excellent,
It increases virtue.
Strict-vowed Brahmins
Should listen to it,
As should Kṣatriyas
Who guard their realms
And protect their subjects with dharma;
So should Vaiśyas;
Śūdras, who serve the first
Three castes, should listen to it
Reverently.

88 Brahmins and others
Who listen or recite this itihāsa-history
With attention and reverence,
Will attain heaven.
Gods, Brahmins, all men
Will honour and respect them.

89 This is the *Bhārata,*
Bhagavān Vyāsa's story.
Veda-knowing Brahmins,
All who hear or recite it
With reverence, without ill will,
Will find great merit,
Will attain heaven.
Ill deed done, good not done,
Will not trouble them.

90 Here is a śloka:

This equals the Vedas; it is holy, it is incomparable.
It brings wealth, fame, life. Listen to it raptly.

SECTION NINETY-SIX

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
In the race of Ikṣvāku
Was born rājā Mahābhīṣa,
Lord of the earth, truth-speaker,
Truly valiant.

2 He performed a thousand aśvamedhas
And a hundred rājasūyas;
He pleased the lord of the gods, Deveśa-Indra,
And attained heaven.

3 Once upon a time the gods gathered
To worship Brahmā; many royal ṛṣis
Were present, among them Mahābhīṣa,
The great healer.

4 Gaṅgā, of rivers the finest, came
To offer homage to Pitāmaha Brahmā;
Gusty winds
Uplifted her moon-white dress.

5 The gods looked at the ground,
Bending their heads, but the rājarṣi Mahābhīṣa
Stared fixedly at her.

6 So Bhagavān Brahma cursed him,
With these words:
Be re-born on earth,
And re-achieve this celestial realm!

7 *And Gaṅgā, who roused your lust, you wretch,*
Will afflict you there, in the world of men.

8 *Only when Gaṅgā stirs you to anger,*
Shall your curse be lifted.
King Māhābhīṣa thought of the earth's

9 Many monarchs and ascetics,
And hoped he would be re-born
As powerful Pratīpa's son.

10 Gaṅgā finest of rivers, saw
Mahābhīṣa lose control of himself,
And left, thinking deeply of him.

11 On her way she met the Vasus,
Dwellers of heaven, dejected,
Because they had fallen from heaven.

12 Gaṅgā, finest among rivers, asked:
"Dwellers of heaven, you look sad –
Is everything right with you?"

13 The celestial Vasus replied:
"We have been cursed by mahā-ātmaned Vasiṣṭha
For the most trivial of faults.

14 We crossed the ṛṣi's path, unaware
He was doing his saṁdhyā worship.
He cursed us : *Be born in a womb*!"

15 How can we escape the curse
Of that Brahman-knowing ṛṣi? Lovely lady,
Be our mother on earth.

16 Lovely lady, we will not enter
Any human female's womb."
She agreed, and asked:

17 "What incomparable man is there on earth,
O divine Vasus,
Whom you would like as your father?"

18 The Vasus said:
"To Pratipa will be born
A son, the world-renowned rājā Śāntanu.
He will be our father."

19 Gaṅgā said:
“Defectless ones, that is my wish too.
I shall please Śāntanu.
That is your wish too.”

20 The Vasus said:
“Three-worlds-flowing-river Gaṅgā!
Throw your babies into the waters
As soon as they are born, so that
We may be freed quickly from the mortal world.”

21 Gaṅgā said:
“I will do so. But let my intercourse
With him be not unfruitful –
Let at least one son survive.”

22 The Vasus replied:
“One-eighth of the sperm of each
Of us will go to beget that son –
He will be the son that you desire.

23 But he will not have children.
He will be a powerful son,
But he will die childless.”

24 The Vasus (continued Vaiśampāyana) made this pledge with Gaṅgā and happily retired to their abode in heaven.

SECTION NINETY-SEVEN

1 Rājā Pratīpa devoted himself
To doing good; many years he sat
In ascetic penance at the lower Haidvārā source
Of the Gaṅgā

2 Gaṅgā, lovely lady of guṇas,
Rose from the waters before the king.
Young seductress,

3 Ravishing Gaṅgā,
Went to the rājā and sat
On the right thigh of the rājarṣi,
A thigh as strong asaśāla tree.

4 To the lovely lady on his thigh
Lord of the earth Pratīpa said: "Auspicious one,
What is your desire?"

5 "You, O rājā" she replied.
"I love you. Take me, my lord.
Wise men say:
It is improper to refuse a woman in love."

6 "Beautiful one," said Pratīpa,
"I have never lusted for another's wife,
Or for women outside my caste.
This is dharma, this is my vow."

7 "I am not ugly," she said,
"I do not bring ill fortune, O rājā,
No one has cast a slur on me,
I am not unfit for sexual enjoyment.
I am celestial, I am beautiful,
I love you. Take me, my lord."

8 Pratīpa replied, "I cannot. I must refuse you.
I must refrain from enjoying you.
If I break my vow of dharma,
I will be destroyed by dharma.

9 You sat on my right thigh, lovely lady.
The right thigh is for daughters,
Lovely lady, and for daughters-in-law.

10 The left is for the passionate woman.
You did not sit on my left.
Loveliest of ladies, I cannot take you.

11 But be my daughter-in-law, O lovely-thighed lady.
I accept you for my son.
The right thigh is for the daughter-in-law."

12 "So be it, O king wise in dharma!
I will unite with your son.
Because I respect your with deep bhakti,
I will be a wife of the Bharata race.

13 You are the shelter of the world.
Even with a hundred years to praise them,
I cannot exhaust your merits.

14 Great is the goodness of Bharata monarchs!
But I will make one condition to you
Who are wise in dharma,
Your son must never question what I do.

15 I will serve him and make him happy.
I will bear him sons.
His good deeds will take him to heaven."

16 She said this and vanished. Saying, "So be it,"
The rājā waited for the birth of his son,
So that all this should come to pass.

17 That bull-brave Kṣatriya Pratīpa
And his wife practised severe tapasyā
In the hope of getting a son.

18 And in due time
In the womb of Pratīpa's wife
Was conceived a son
as radiant as the full moon in autumn.

19 In the tenth month
Pratīpa's wife gave birth
To a god-like son
Who dazzled like the sun itself.

18 In their old age, a son
Was born to them –
Mahābhīṣa the "Great Healer"
Whom they called Śāntanu
Or the Child of Controlled Passions.

21 Śāntanu, best among the Kauravas,
Knowing only good karma could bring heaven,
Devoted himself to good deeds.

22 When he came of age, Pratīpa
Said to him, "Śāntanu, my son,
A divine lady came to me once,

23 For your welfare.
Should you meet that lovely lady,
And should she express her kāma for you,
And should she desire children by you,
Accept her as your wife.

24 Do not question anything she does.
Do not ask who she is, or whose,
Or from where she comes.
Marry her because I command it."

25 With this command, Pratīpa
Installed Śāntanu rājā, and
Retired to the forest.

24 Śāntanu shone like Indra, the rājā of the gods.
He was fond of the hunt.
He spent much time in the woods.

25 He hunted deer and buffalo. One day, he came
To the banks of the Gaṅgā, an area protected
By Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

26 There he met her, O maharājā Janamejaya,
Śrī-Lakṣmi herself,
A lady of incomparable beauty.

27 Teeth like pearls.
Dress finely-textured
Like lotus-petals.
Glittering ornaments
On her body. Lady
Of faultless bewildering beauty,
There, alone.

28 He stood there,
Entranced,
All his body
In horripilation.
With both eyes
He drank in her beauty,
And wanted
To drink even more.

29 She saw the rājā
In shining splendour.
She was moved
With tenderness and affection.
She kept gazing
and gazing
and longed to gaze
even more.

30 The rājā said to her:
"Slender-waisted beauty!
Goddess! Devī!
Apsarā!
Lady of the Dānavas!
Lady of the Gandharvas!

31 Yakṣi!
Lady of the Nāgas!
Lady of the human race! —
Whatever you are, celestial lady.
O incomparable enchantress,
Be my wife!"

SECTION NINETY-EIGHT

1 She heard the sweet words
Of the smiling king; she remembered
The promise she had made to the Vasus.

2 She replied (and every word of hers
Thrilled the king), "World-protector!
I will be your wife and obey you.

3 But you O rājā, must never question
What I do, agreeable or disagreeable,
And never speak to me harshly.

4 As long as this agreement is kept,
O lord of the earth,
I will stay with you; the instant
It is violated, and you speak to me harshly,
I will leave you.

5 Taking Gangā Devī
with him in his chariot,
the rājā returned
to his palace.
She was indeed
a second Lakṣmī.

6 "So let it be," said Śāntanu.
And she was very happy
To have the excellent king for husband.

7 So was Śāntanu happy to have her.
He delighted in her company.
Following his father's advice,
He never questioned her.

8 Śāntanu was enchanted by her beauty,
Her behaviour, magnanimity,
Her solicitude for his comfort.

9 Three-worlds-flowing-river Gaṅgā,
In her human form, lovely
Lady of excellent features,

10 As wife of Śāntanu, reaped
The fruit of her virtues, for
He was best among kings, like radiant Indra.

11 She delighted him with love-making,
With witty conversation, with astute gentleness,
And was herself delighted.

12 Captivated by her skilful love-making,
The rājā was not conscious of
The months, seasons, years that rolled by.

13 He enjoyed her sexually in every possible way;
and eight sons were born,
Like the gods themselves.

14 And as soon as they were born,
Gaṅgā threw them in the river, one by one,
Saying, *I do this for your good.*

15 Śāntanu was hurt, but
He did not say a word.
The lord of the earth was afraid
She would leave him.

16 When the eighth son was born,
The raja said to his smiling wife Gaṅgā
Sorrowfully, hoping to save that son,

17 "Oh, do not kill him!
Who are you?
Where do you come from?
Why do you kill your own sons?
Terrible will be your punishment for this crime!"

18 Gaṅgā replied: "You want this son.
He is yours, O best among fathers!
But now I must leave you –
Such was our agreement.

19 I am Gaṅgā,
daughter of Jahnu,
respected by ṛṣis.
I have lived so long
as your wife,
for the sake of the Vasus.

20 These sons are the Vasus,
eight in all,
cursed by Vasiṣṭha
to assume human form
for a trivial fault
they once committed.

21 No man on earth was fit
to be their father – but you :
No woman on earth was fit
to be their mother – but me.

22 So I assumed human shape,
and became their mother.
Undecaying heaven is yours O rājā,
because you fathered them.

23 I promised I would free them
from the bondage of life
as soon as they were born.
This I have done.

24 I have kept my promise.
Mahā-ātmaned Vasiṣṭha's curse is ended.
May you prosper, Śāntanu. I leave you
with this child of strict vows.

25 He is a composite of the Vasus.
I had promised the Vasus
I would stay with you only so long.
Look after this boy, call him
Gaṅgādatta, the Gift of Gaṅgā."

SECTION NINETY-NINE

1 "Who was Vasiṣṭha? asked Śāntanu. "What ill-deed of the Vasus made them get re-born among men as a result of his curse?

2 And your son, Gaṅgādatta – what had he done that he had to be born among men?

3 Why were the lords of the three worlds, the Vasus, so severely punished? Daughter of Jahnu, tell me all."

4 The divine lady, Jahnu's daughter Gaṅgā (continued Vaiśampāyana), said to her husband, rājā Śāntanu:

5 "The son whom Varuṇa, a long time ago, took as his son, was the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha

6 His āśrama nestled on the slopes
of the sacred mountain Meru;
Deer and birds filled it,
lovely flowers adorned it in all seasons.

7 That was where Varuṇa's son Vasiṣṭha,
best among virtuous men,
practised his tapasyā,
subsisting on fruits, roots and water.

8 Prājāpati Dakṣa had a daughter Devī Surabhi who, by union with Kaśyapa, gave birth to a cow.

9 Vasiṣṭha, the dharmātmā son of Varuṇa, obtained that marvellous wish-fulfilling cow for his homa rituals.

10 She lived in the forest,
worshipped by the ṛṣis;
She roamed without fear
in the sacred and lovely woods.

11 O best among the Bharatas,
is so happened that once
the divine Vasus, led by Pṛthu,
came to that forest.

12 With their wives they roamed
freely in the forest, savouring
the manifold delights
of mountains and streams.

13 O king powerful like Vāsava-Indra,
one of the slim-waisted wives
chanced to see the cow
wandering in the forest.

14 Nandinī, cow of plenty,
granter of all wishes –
the Vasu's wife saw her
and was struck with wonder,

15 And pointed her out to Dyaus –
Marvellous Nandinī,
Large-eyed Nandinī,
Full-uddered Nandinī,
Milk-yielding Nandinī,
Cow with all auspicious signs.

16 O descendant of Pūru!
This was the way, in the past,
how the cow of plenty
was shown to Dyaus.

17 When Dyaus saw her, O Indra-among-rājās
he was enraptured;
he was lost in admiration,
and said to his wife :

18 'Lovely-thighed lady, devī,
this black-eyed cow of plenty
is the property of the ṛṣi
who runs this holy āśrama.

19 Slender-waisted wife,
the person drinking the milk
of this cow stays young
for ten thousand years.'

20 As soon as she heard this,
the slender-waisted lady
said to her husband
of flaming glory:

21 'I have a loved-and-loving friend on earth,
princess Jitavatī:
she is young, she is
unsurpassably beautiful.

22 She is the daughter of
wise, truthful, noble Uśīnara:
her loveliness is a legend
in every corner of the world.

23 It is for her that I want
this cow and her calf.
O best among Vasus, virtue-increasing lord,
bring them to me.

24 Then will my friend
drinking the cow's milk
be the only person on earth
free from disease and decay.

25 Shining god, blameless lord,
grant me this wish.
There is nothing in this world
I would like more.'

26 Dyaus heard her and,
to please her, with the help
of Pṛthu and his other brothers,
he stole the cow.

27 Because his lotus-eyed wife asked him,
Dyaus did what he did,
unmindful of the strict-vowed ṛṣi,
oblivious to the penalty for stealing.

28 Late in the evening Vasiṣṭha returned
with fruits to his āśrama.
The cow and calf were nowhere.
He started searching for them.

29 He searched everywhere,
that tapasyā-wealthy ṛṣi;
he searched late and long,
but could not find them.

30 Then, with divine darshan,
he discovered who had stolen her.
His anger was roused,
he cursed the Vasus,

31 Saying: *The Vasus have stolen*
my sweet-milked, fine-tailed cow.
May they have birth on earth
in the world of men!

32 O best of the Bhāratas!
Bhagavān Āpava-Vasiṣṭha,
finest of ṛṣis, cursed
the Vasus in anger,

33 And, after cursing them, the mahā-auspicious ṛṣi
recommenced his tapasyā.
Cursed by the tapasyā-wealthy ṛṣi,
the Vasus, O rājā,

34 Hurried to the āśrama
of the holy one
as soon as news of the curse
reached their ears.

35 And they tried their utmost
to placate the mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi,
but they failed to move
that best among ṛṣis,

36 Āpava-Vasiṣṭha,
learned in all the dharmas,
All the dharmātmā ṛṣi
said, was:

37 'I have cursed Dyaus
and all of you Vasus.
Within one year of your mortal birth,
the curse will leave you one by one,

38 But not Dyaus, the guilty one,
He will continue to pass
his days on earth
for the crime he committed

39 I may have been angry,
but my words will not be fruitless.
Dyaus will live as a mortal.
He will not have children.

40 He will be a dharmātmā,
learned in all the śāstrās.
He will obey his father,
he will stay away from women.'

41 He said this to the Vasus,
and left. After he left,
all the Vasus in a group
came to seek my help.

42 They implored me, O rājā:
O Gaṅgā, be kind to us –
as soon as we are born –
in glory and guṇas.

43 I did so, O finest of rājās,
to free them from mortality,
from the consequences
of the curse on them.

44 Noble Bharata! Excellent king!
Only one, Dyaus,
will continue to live on earth
as a result of the curse.

45 This is my son, Devavrata,
also called Gaṅgādatta:
he will excel even you,
in glory and guṇas,

46 He is still a boy;
when he grows up, he
will come to you; summoned,
I too will come to you."

47 The goddess Gaṅgā disappeared.
She took her son with her
and went to the place of her choice
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

48 Śāntanu's son was both
Devavrata and Gangādatta:
he excelled his father
in glory and guṇas.

49 Śāntanu sadly returned
to his capital. Let me tell you,
O king, now of the glory
and guṇas of Śāntanu,

50 And the great good fortune
of the mahā-ātmaned Bharata ruler
whose history is the history
known as the *Mahābhārata*.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Rājā Śāntanu, respected by gods
and rājarṣis, was famous
all over the world as a dharmātmā
of truthfulness.

2 In Śāntanu could be found
self-discipline, generosity,
forgiveness, intelligence,
energy, patience, and humility.

3 He was a storehoure of guṇas.
He knew dharma and artha.
He protected the Bharatas.
He protected the entire world.

4 His neck like a conch-shell,
shoulders broad, strength like an elephant's,
all the auspicious marks of royalty chose
his body as their fittest abode.

5 His subjects noted the deeds
of this vastly-accomplished king,
and concluded that dharma
always surpassed artha and kāma.

6 All these accomplishments
were in Śāntanu:
never was there a king
to equal Śāntanu.

7 The kings of the earth
saw this king of dharma
and honoured Śāntanu
as the rājā of rājās.

8 In the reign of Śāntanu,
fear and anxiety never harassed
any ruler: sleep was peaceful,
waking up peaceful.

9 The kings became generous;
good deeds and yajñas increased –
all results of the noble example
set by Indra-like Śāntanu.

10 Because the earth was ruled
by Śāntanu and kings
like him, the four castes
followed the path of dharma

11 Kṣatriyas served the Brahmins;
Vaiśyas served the Kṣatriyas;
Śūdras, honouring Brahmins and Kṣatriyas,
served the Vaiśyas.

12 Śāntanu lived in Hastināpura,
the splendid capital of the Kurus;
his kingdom straddled the earth
bounded by the oceans.

13 He was like Indra the rājā of the gods
in truthfulness, dharma,
generosity and tapasyā;
his fame impressed the world.

14 He had no anger, no malice,
he was handsome like Soma,
sun-refulgent, wind-energetic, like Antaka-Yama
in righteous wrath, forgiving like the earth.

15 During the region of Śāntanu
no deer, boar, bird
or any other animal
was slaughtered.

16 Brahmā and Dharma were the lords
in the kingdom of Śāntanu –
a gentle ruler untouched
by kāma and anger; ruling all impartially.

17 There were yajñas to the gods,
yajñas to ṛṣis, yajñas to pitṛs,
Never, for fear of adharma,
was life wrongfully taken.

18 This rājā was a comforter
of the sorrowing, like a father to those
without shelter – even birds,
beasts, and all other creatures.

19 During the reign of this rājā of rājās,
truth and dharma flourished;
all spoke the truth,
all practised charity and dharma.

20 For thirtysix years
king Śāntanu enjoyed
the company of women,
then retired to the forest.

21 Śāntanu's son Devavrata,
the Vasu born to Gaṅgā,
resembled his father in handsomeness,
learning and noble conduct.

22 Expert in the war-weapons
of heaven and earth;
he was mahā-powerful, mahā-patient,
mahā-valiant,

23 It so happened that once
Śāntanu, pursuing a wounded deer
beside the Gaṅgā, noticed
the waters receding.

24 Seeing this, that bull-among-men
Śāntanu said to himself: *Strange!*
Why doesn't the finest of rivers
flow as before?

25 Searching for the cause, mahā-minded
Śāntanu came across
a handsome, powerfully-built,
smiling young boy

26 Looking like Puraṁdara-Indra himself;
this young boy
with this divine arrows
had stemmed the flowing waters.

27 Rājā Śāntanu was stupefied
by the feat of the Gaṅgā's waters
blocked in their onrush
by a mere boy's arrows.

28 Since he had seen the child
only briefly at his birth,
Śāntanu could not recall
that the boy was his own son.

29 But the young boy,
seeing his father, quickly
spread māyā over Śāntanu,
and disappeared.

30 Rājā Śāntanu, bewildered,
vaguely believing the boy
to be his son, said
to Gaṅgā, "Show him to me."

31 Ravishing Gaṅgā
appeared before him,
holding the right hand
of the ornamented youth.

32 So lovely was Gaṅgā,
so dazzling her beauty,
so glittering with gems,
so richly dressed,
Śāntanu could not recognise her,
though he had seen her before.

33 Gaṅgā said:
O rājā, lion-among-men, this child
is your eighth son by me.
He is your excellent boy,
skilled in arms.

34 Take him now.
Great is the care I have given him.
O finest among men,
take him home.

35 With Vaśiṣṭha he studied
the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.
He is a fine archer, like the rājā of the gods
Indra himself in battle.

36 Both the gods and anti-gods
regard him highly.
Whatever Vedas and śāstras
Śakra-Indra knows, he knows too.

37 Whaever Vedas and śāstras
the son of Aṅgiras,
honoured by gods and anti-gods, knows,
this child knows too.

38 All weapons that were known
to the son of Jamadagni, Paraśurāma,
are known to this shining,
strong-armed boy.

39 He is a splendid archer,
he knows the arts of war,
and the dharma of rājās.
O rājā, take him home."

40 Ordered by Gaṅgā,
Śāntanu took his sun-
effulgent son, and started
on his way back to his capital.

41 Arriving in his capital,
the city of Indra, he
considered himself fortunate
at being so blessed.

42 He installed the illustrious boy
as heir-apparent,
for the protection of the kingdom
and the safety of his subjects.

43 The boy pleased his father,
and all members of his family;
he pleased his subjects
with his noble conduct.

44 Four years passed
in this manner,
father, son, and subjects,
living happily together.

45 One day Śāntanu went
to a forest near the Yamunā;
roaming there, he smelt
a sudden, fine fragrance,

46 And looking everywhere
for its source, he saw
a fisher-girl
of celestial beauty.

47 She was black-eyed.
He said to her, "Shy girl,
who are you? whose daughter?
what are you doing here?"

48 She replied, "Sire, be blessed!
I am the daughter
of the mahā-ātmaned fisherfolk Dāśa-rājā.
I ply this boat on his orders."

49 She was fragrant,
beautiful,
smiling.
Śāntanu saw her,
and desired her.

50 He went to her father
and said, "I want your daughter."
The Dāśa-rājā
replied to the lord of the earth:

51 "When my lovely child was born,
I decided that I would
marry her to a suitable man.
Lord of men, listen to me.

52 Make me a promise.
If you wish her as your wife,
your dharmapatni,
then truthfully, O defectless one,
make me one promise.

53 Gladly will I give
my daughter to you, O king,
for where can I find a husband
equal to you?"

54 Śāntanu said:
"Tell me, O Dāśa, what you want,
before I promise anything.
If it is in my power to give it,
I will make the promise."

55 "O lord of the earth," said the fisher chief,
"the son born to my daughter
will be heir to the throne,
and no one else."

56 And Śāntanu refused.
Though the fire of desire
ravaged his body,
he refused the fisherman's desire.

57 He returned to Hastināpura.
Desire maddened him.
He kept thinking
of the daughter of the Dāśa chief.

58 One day, while he sat
dejected, thinking of the girl,
his son Devavrata
came to him, and said:

59 "Everywhere around you
are signs of prosperity.
All chiefs and rulers obey you.
Why are you sad?

60 So lost in thought are you, O rājā,
you don't even reply.
Horse-riding does not please you.
You grow pale and thin.

61 Tell me, father, what sorrow
is in your heart,
that I may look for a cure."
Śāntanu said to his son:

62 "Yes, I suffer, my son.
And I will tell you why.
You are the Bharata descedant,
the scion of our great dynasty.

63 You are skilled in arms
and variously accomplished, my son.
but the world is so unstable,
life so uncertain,

64 That I wonder, son of Gaṅgā,
should anything happen to you . . .
what will happen to our dynasty?
You are more than a hundred sons to me.

65 It isn't that I wish to marry
again. My only wish is
that you should prosper,
and our dynasty continue.

66 Wise men say : One son
is so son at all.
Having one son only is
like having one eye only.
That eye lost, means body lost.
That son lost, means family doomed.
Agni-hotṛ-fire-worship and Veda-knowledge
do not give one-sixteenth.

67 The merit that comes
with the birth of a son.
In this respect, it is said,
all creatures are alike.
O mahā-learned Bharata!

68 I believe firmly that heaven
is his who has a son.
The eternal Vedas, essence of the Purāṇas,
corroborate this.

69 The three shining lights are:
children, karma, and knowledge
My dear child, *tāta*, of these
the greatest is children

70 You, my son, O great Bharata,
are strong-willed, you are always
practising various war weapons.
Should you die in battle,

71 What will be the fate, my dear son, *tāta*,
of our race, our dynasty?
This is the cause of my sorrow.
Now you know."

72 Mahā-intelligent and wise Devavrata heard the raja carefully (continued Vaiśampāyana) and rolled the matter over in his mind.

73 He went to the old minister
devoted to his father's service;
he asked the minister
the reason for his father's sorrow.

74 Questioned by the brave Kaurava,
the old minister recounted
the whole story about the promise
concerning the fishergirl.

75 Sadly Devavrata summoned
the king's charioteer.
who hurried at the summons
Mahā-wise Devavrata said to him:

76 "You are my father's charioteer,
his friend; tell me, who is the girl
who so enraptures his heart?
You surely know.

77 After I learn from you,
I will do as you advise."
The charioteer replied,
"A fisher chief's daughter.

78 His majesty asked for her hand.
A pledge was demanded;
The son from her womb
would succeed to the throne.

79 Your father hesitated; her father
persisted. The pledge remains.
What I tell you is true.
Now do as you think best."

80 Devavrata heard this and,
accompanied by elderly Kṣatriya chiefs,
went to the fisher lord and asked
the fisher lord's daughter for his father.

81 The fisher lord received him warmly.
When Devavrata was seated,
he said to him among
all the elderly Kṣatriya chiefs:

82 "Gladly will I give my daughter,
but my condition is this:
the child from her womb will be the rājā,
he must succeed to the throne.

83 O bull-brave Bharata,
great-arms-wielder, son of Śāntanu,
I have a special word for you,
O immeasurably puissant one.

84 Even Śatakratu-Indra would regret
rejecting the excellent offer
of marriage you have made,
were Indra the bride's father.

85 For Satyavatī, loveliest of girls,
possesses all the guṇas;
she is the daughter of a man
whose virility equals yours.

86 Indeed, many times has he spoken
of your father's greatness.
He often told me your wise-in-dharma father
alone was fit to marry Satyavatī.

87 And I may add –
I have already rejected
your rājarṣi father once
when he asked for her hand.

88 As her father, I would like
to say just this –
my sole objection to her marrying your father
is your magnificent valour.

89 With you as anyone's rival,
who can feel secure –
can Gandharva, can antigod?
Your displeasure is his death.

90 That is my objection,
none other. O great foe-smiter,
I have nothing more to say
about Satyavatī's marriage."

91 Gaṅgā's son Devavrata,
in the presence of all assembled,
heard this, and for his father's
sake, said before the assembly:

92 "Great truth-speaking lord
of fisher folk! Listen to me!
None born has taken, none born
will take the vow I take today!

93 It will be as you say.
What you say will be so.
The son of your daughter's womb
will be rājā. I promise it."

94 Eager to settle the matter of his daughter's son being reigning monarch, the Dāśa fisher lord said:

95 "Dharmātmā son, refuge and strength
of your illustrious father!
Be the refuge and strength
of my to-be-bestowed daughter.

96 Something remains to be said,
something remains to be done.
All fathers who have daughters
will say as I say.

97 O noble follower of truth and dharma!
Worthy of you is the promise
you have made in front
of these assembled rājās.

98 Never for a moment do I doubt
that you will keep it, O mahā-muscled hero!
But how can I be sure
that your sons will honour it."

99 Noble-follower-of-truth-and-dharma
Devavrata understood the mind
of the fisher lord. Seeking
his father's good, he said:

100 "O Dāśa-rājā! Finest of men!
Listen to my words
which I utter in the presence
of these great Kṣatriyas.

101 O ṛṣis!
O gods!
O all inter-space creatures!
Listen to what I say!
There is none other
Who will say what I say!
I say this for my father's good.
Understand me!

102 Did I not, O Kṣatriyas,
give up my right to the throne
a little while ago?
Let me settle this once and for all now.

103 Fisherman, from today
I adopt celibacy,
I am now a *brahmācarī*.
Sonless, nonetheless I will find heaven.

104 I have never lied in my life.
So long as I breathe,
I will remain celibate.
Give your daughter to my father.
Today I give up the kingdom,
I give up sex forever.
I will draw my semen within myself,
O Dāśa chief!
I take this vow of truth."

105 Horripilating, the dharmātmā fisher lord
heard these words, and
in great delight said,
"I give you my daughter."

106 Apsaras
gods
ṛṣis
rained
sky
flowers
and exclaimed
Bhīṣma
the Awesome One!

107 Acting for his father's good,
Bhīṣma turned to her, saying,
"Mother, climb into this chariot,
come, let us go home."

108 Bhīṣma helped the lovely girl ascend
his chariot. He arrived
in Hastināpura,
and told Śāntanu everything

109 Chiefs
rulers
singly
together
applauded the fearful feat
Bhīṣma
the Awesome One!

110 And Śāntanu, hearing
the fearful feat of his son,
gave mahātmā Bhīṣma this boon:
O my spotless son, So long as you wish to live
Death will not touch you.
You will die only when you wish to die.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-ONE

1 Satyavatī was the daughter
of the rājā of Cedī;
she had been reared
by the Dāśa-rājā.

2 When rājā Śāntanu discovered this,
he married her with
the proper ceremonies, and made her
queen of his palace.

3 Wise Śāntanu had,
by his wife Satyavatī
a son Citrāngada,
a lord among men.

4 Valiant Śāntanu had another son
by her – Vicitravīrya –
who was celebrated
as a mighty archer.

5 Before Vicitravīrya
had come of age,
wise Śāntanu fell victim to Kāla-dharma,
Cosmic Time Kāla.

6 Śāntanu went to heaven,
and Bhīṣma, obedient
to Satyavatī, installed
Citrāṅgada as king.

7 So puissant was Citrāṅgada,
he defeated all the lords
of the world one by one.
None could humble him.

8 The gods and anti-gods
    saw him defeat everyone,
and the gandharva rājā,
    also named Citrāṅgada,
decided to challenge him,
    and defeat him in battle.

9 A fearful combat
    ensued on Kurukṣetra
on the banks of the Sarasvatī
    between the two Citrāñgadas.

10 "You who usurp my name!"
    shouted the gandharva,
"Either renounce it,
    or be defeated by me!

11 My name is my honour!
    I fight for my name!
No mere mortal
    will be owner of my name!"

12 Showers of weapons
    fell in that duel;
the gandharva killed the Kaurava
    with the help of māyā.

13 Making sure the lion-like Kaurava
    Citrāñgada was dead,
Citrāṅgada the gandharva
    returned to heaven.

14 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
    performed all the ceremonies
pertaining to the dead
    for rājā Citrāṅgada.

15 After which mahā-muscled Bhīsma installed
    Vicitravīrya, still a minor,
on the throne
    of the kingdom of the Kauravas.
And so, mahārāja Janamejaya,

16 Always obedient to Bhīṣma,
    Vicitravīrya ruled
over the kingdom of his father
    and his ancestors.

17 He offered his pūjā-respect
    to profoundly wise Bhīṣma, who was
learned in dharma and the śāstras,
    and Bhīṣma protected him.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-TWO

1 With Citrāṅgada dead and Vicitravīrya still a minor (continued Vaiśampāyana), Bhīṣma was in effect the ruler of the kingdom; this was approved by Satyavatī.

2 And when his brother Vicitravīrya came of age, wise and noble Bhīṣma thought of arranging a suitable marriage for him.

3 News reached him one day
that the three apsarā-like
daughters of the king of Kāśi
were holding a svayamvara.

4 So Bhima, the foe-chastiser,
the mahā-chariot-warrior, following
Satyavatī's command, went
in a chariot to Vārāṇasī.

5 Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu,
saw assembled there
a concourse of kings and rulers –
and the three princesses.

6 As the names of the rājās
were being called out,
Bhīṣma arrived there
in his chariot.

7 Some exquisitely lovely girls
in the hall, saw him,
bearded; giggling, *He is old,*
they fled from the place.

8 And the assembled kings
joked among themselves,
shamelessly, *We hear Bhīṣma*
is a supreme dharmātmā,

9 *Old, wrinkled Bhīṣma*
from whom the ladies run!
Bhīṣma the brahmacāri
comes here ... Why?

10 *What will the world say*
about such a brahmacārī?
Bhīṣma heard these taunts of the Kṣatriyas
and was infuriated.

11 He made up his mind
to take the princesses himself.
Pulling them inside his chariot,
Bhīṣma, finest of heroes,

12 Shouted to the kings
in a cloud-roaring voice:
"According to the wise,
when an accomplished man

13 Is invited to one's house,
a girl can be bestowed on him,
with as many ornaments on her,
and as much dowry as one can afford.

14 Some bestow their daughter
in exchange for two cows and a bull.
Some accept a sum of money,
some abduct the girl.

15 Some make mutual agreement,
some drug the girl into consent,
some seek the parents' approval,
some get wives as presents

16 For helping at yajñas.
There are eight forms of marriage.
Kṣatriyas praise the svayamvara.
Knowers of dharma recommend marriage

17 Where the wife is taken by force
from the midst of gathered heroes.
So, I take these girls by śakti!
Prevent me, or accept me!

18 Here I am. I will fight!"
Bhīṣma said these words
to the assembled kings and the rājā of Kāśi
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

19 And pushed the princesses
inside his chariot. Throwing
out his challenge to all,
he sped away.

20 They leapt up, in collective anger.
They slapped their arms,
the assembled kings,
they bit their lower lips.

21 They threw off their ornaments
in great haste:
and put on their armours
in a furious clatter.

22 Their ornaments and armours,
O Janamejaya,
dazzled like meteors
that flash across the sky.

23 Foreheads furrowed in anger,
eyes red and piercing;
their ornaments and armours
swung as they strode.

24 Their charioteers brought
splendid chariots before them;
armed with numerous weapons,
they climbed into the chariots,

25 And sped off in pursuit
of the great Kaurava hero.
O great Bharata,
it was a magnificent battle!

26 A horripilating battle!
Many kings – and one hero!
They shot, at one instant,
ten thousand arrows at him.

27 Bhīṣma blocked them with
a counter-shower of arrows,
as many as the countless
hairs on his body.

28 They encircled him.
They rained arrows on him
as thick as cloud-clusters
enveloping mountains.

29 He blocked them again
with arrows of his own.
He wounded each king
with triple-headed arrows.

30 Such was the fierce battle,
so dense the arrowy showers,
it seemed the gods and anti-gods
were fighting. Even heroes trembled.

31 Bhīṣma, with his arrows,
lopped off flag-staffs,
pierced armours, decapitated
his foes in hundreds and thousands

32 Such skill, such prowess!
Such subtle self-defence!
Even his enemies, the chariot heroes,
loudly applauded Bhīṣma.

33 Defeating them in battle,
arms-wielding Bhīṣma
brave Bhīṣma, drove off with the girls
to the capital of the Bharatas.

34 At that moment rājā Śālva,
mahā-chariot-warrior,
came up from behind and challenged
Bhīṣma to a duel.

35 He came upon Bhīṣma
like a rutting lord of elephants
who rips open a rival's flanks
with his tusks for the possession

36 Of a she-elephant.
He wanted the girls back,
so his anger reverberated
in the words, *Stop! Stop!*

37 The great foe-destroyer, Bhīṣma,
best among men, stopped;
his anger blazed up
when he heard the words.

38 Abiding by the dharma
of the Kṣatriyas, he halted
his chariot; his brow wrinkled;
he stood still, expectant.

39 His chariot came
to a dead stop; the other kings
stood around, waiting
for the duel between Bhīṣma and Śālva.

40 Both displayed their prowess –
like two snorting bulls
of fierce strength preparing
for battle over a cow.

41 Śālva shot first, straddling
Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son,
with hundreds and thousands
of swift-speeding arrows.

42 The kings saw Śālva
baffle Bhīṣma Śāntanu's son,
with arrows, and, astonished, cried:
Sādhu! Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!

43 They saw his deftness,
his skill of archer's hand,
and they applauded the feat
of lord-among-men Śālva.

44 Bhīṣma heard their cries,
Bhīṣma, conqueror
of hostile cities, son of Śāntanu,
and shouted, *Wait! Wait!*

45 Bhīṣma shouted to his charioteer,
"Take me instantly to where Śālva is.
I will kill him like the king of birds
Garuḍa killing a snake."

46 He attached the Vāruṇa arrow
to his bowstring,
and he wounded, the next instant,
Śālva's four chariot steeds.

47 The great Kaurava hero blocked
Śālva's weapons with his own,
and with his next arrow
killed Śālva's charioteer.

48 Śāntanu's son, best-among-men Bhīṣma,
for the sake
of the girls, next killed the steeds
with his Aindra missile.

49 He let defeated Śālva escape;
having done which,
he returned to his capital,
and Śālva went back to his kingdom.

50 In his capital, Śālva ruled
wisely over his people.
The other rājās in the meantime
returned to their capitals.

51 Bhīṣma, victorious,
brought the girls with him
to Hastināpura, where
the king of the Kauravas,

52 Vicitravirya reigned.
Vicitravīrya was a dharmātmā
like his father, the great
and honoured Śāntanu.

53 Swift was Bhīṣma's arrival
in the capital; he crossed
forests, rivers, hills, and woods
in no time.

54 Son of the oceanic river,
dharmātma Bhīṣma, brave in battle,
unscarred slayer of his foes,
brought up Kāśi's daughters

55 As tenderly as if they were
his younger sisters, daughters,
or daughters-in-law. Bhīṣma
did this for the welfare

56 Of his brother Vicitravīrya.
In fact, he intended
to bestow the three princesses
on his brother.

57 Wise-in-dharma Bhīṣma bestowed them
on his brother, and,
following dharma, made
preparations for the marriage.

58 The details of the marriage
were settled by Satyavatī.
The eldest princess, however,
Kāśi-rājā's chaste daughter, said:

59 "I have already chosen
king Śālva for husband.
He has chosen me too.
My father has approved.

60 In the svayamvara,
I would have chosen king Śālva.
Wise in dharma, you know the truth of dharma.
Decide as you think fit."

61 The princess said this
before an assembly of the twice-born.
Bhīṣma heard, and wondered
what he should do.

62 He consulted the Brahmins
(who were learned in the Vedas)
and permitted Ambā, the eldest princess,
to choose as she wished.

63 Ambikā and Ambālikā
he bestowed on his brother
Vicitravīrya, with all the rites
as ordained.

64 Though a dharmātmā,
Vicitravīrya, after marriage,
driven by passion, became a kāmātmā,
a victim of his own lust.

65 Both his wives were tall.
Black, wavy hair.
Fingernails and toe nails
Painted red, and pointed.
Hips round and full.
Swelling and large breasts.

66 Sweet-smiling, beautiful,
With all auspicious marks
On their bodies, they
Loved Vicitravīrya,
Respected him, and
Honoured him.

67 For he had the handsomeness
of the Aśvins, the glory
of the gods, he could enchant
the heart of any woman.

68 That lord of the earth enjoyed his wives
for seven years; then,
consumption gripped him,
while still in the prime of his youth.

69 Friends and royal relatives
consulted physicians, sought cures.
He went to the land of Yama,
like a setting sun.

70 Great was the grief
of Gaṅgā's dharmātmā son
Bhīṣma, great his anxiety.
Consulting other Kaurava chiefs,

71 Consulting Satyavatī
he ordered the proper rites
of cremation to be performed
by the revered ṛtviks.

ECTION ONE HUNDRED-THREE

1 Hoping-for-sons (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Satyavati, saddened by her son's death,
performed the necessary rituals
with her bereaved daughters-in-law.

2 She sweetly consoled them,
she consoled the war-weapons expert Bhīṣma.
Then, with dharma in mind,
thinking of paternal
and maternal lines of succession,
she said to Bhīṣma:

3 "Noble one, the funeral *piṇḍa,*
the fame and the future
of the house of dharma-cherishing Śāntanu
are now in your hands.

4 As heaven to good deeds,
as long life to truth-speaking,
so are you to dharma,
O Bhīṣma.

5 Wise in dharma! Acquainted
with dharma in abstract
and in detail! Wise in śruti
and in all the Vedāṅgas!

6 Like Śukra and Arigiras-Bṛhaspati
in bravery and dharma,
in steadiness of mind,
in cherishing family customs!

7 O dharma-rich Bhīṣma, I trust you!
Because I have faith in you,
I will ask you one favour.
Do it for me.

8 O bull-among-men, the daughters
of the king of Kāśi,
your brother's wives, young
and lovely, want children.

9 O Bharata descendant,
my son, your brother
Vicitravīrya, whom you loved,
went to heaven sonless.

10 O mahā-muscled Bhīṣma,
it is my command
that you follow dharma
by fathering sons.

11 Install yourself king, rule
the kingdom of the Bharatas;
marry according to dharma;
have sons, O Bhīṣma,
and by this deed of dharma,
save your ancestors from hell."

12 Foe-smiting Bhīṣma heard the advice of his mother and his well-wishers and, following the dictates of dharma, dharmātmā Bhīṣma said:

13 "Mother, what you say
is in accordance with dharma.
But you know my vow
about not begetting children.

14 And you know the condition
laid down at the time
of your bestowal. I repeat, Satyavatī,
the promise I then made.

15 I will give up the three worlds,
I will give up the kingdom of heaven,
I will give up more than the three worlds and
heaven,
But I will not give up truth.

16 Earth may give up fragrance,
water its rasa,
light clarity,
wind movement,

17 Sun may give up splendour,
fire its heat,
moon coolness,
ākāśa-sky its śabda-ether,

18 Indra, Vṛtra-slayer, may give up valour,
Dharma-rājā give up dharma,
But I will not break my vow of truth.

19 Let doom overtake the world!
Immortality cannot tempt me,
nor lordship of the three worlds!
I will not break my vow."

20 When she heard
her energy-radiant son
speak these words,
Mātā Satyavatī said to him:

21 "Firm-in-truth Bhīṣma,
my son!
Devoted-to-truth Bhīṣma,
my son!
With your energy,
my son,
You can create three new worlds
if you like!

22 How well I remember your vow of truth!
But at this time, again,
I implore you – think of your duty.
towards your ancestors.
in this crisis of dharma.

23 O foe-subduing son, act
so that dharma is preserved,
the line of our race continued,
our well-wishers kept happy."

24 Repeatedly urged
by his sonless grief-stricken mother,
who wanted grandsons,
but whose words
were so inconsistent with dharma,

25 Bhīṣma replied, "See dharma clearly,
do not destroy us all, O rānī.
Nowhere does dharma recommend
violation of truth by Kṣatriyas.

26 Let me explain, now, rānī,
the dharma of the Kṣatriyas,
which alone can help us to continue
the Śāntanu dynasty.

27 After listening to it, decide
what should be done.
Take the advice of purohitas,
abide by the words of those
who advise in crisis-dharma."
– These were Bhīṣma's words.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-FOUR

1 He continued, "Long ago, O mahā-auspicious lady,
the king of the Haihayas
was killed by Paraśurāma,
son of Jamadagni,
with a battle-axe, because Paraśurāma
was angered by his father's death,

2 With his mahā-weapons Paraśurāma sliced off
the thousand arms of Arjuna,
king of the Haihayas –
a difficult feat!

3 And he set his mind
on conquering the world; from his chariot,
he shot weapons from his bow
to annihiliate the Kṣatriyas.

4 In fact, this mahā-ātmaned Bhārgava exterminated
the Kṣatriya race
twentyone times over
with his swift and fierce missiles.

5 With all Kṣatriya heroes dead,
the Kṣatriya ladies
solicited Veda-knowing Brahmins,
and conceived by them;

6 Dharma impelled them,
to do this. The Vedas say,
a son born belongs
to the man who marries the mother.

7 The result was that Kṣatriyas
again populated the earth.
A story is connected with this,
which I will relate.

8 In the very distant past,
    a ṛṣi named Utathya
had a wife named Mamatā
    whom he deeply cherished.

9 One day Utathya's younger brother
    Bṛhaspati, purohita of the gods,
divinely shining ṛṣi,
    sexually solicited Mamatā.

10 She said to her *devara,*
    finest of fine-speaking men,
"I am pregnant by your elder brother –
    do not lust for me now.

11 O noble Bṛhaspati, the baby
    in my womb has studied
the Vedas and their six branches
    while still in the womb.

12 Your semen should not be wasted.
    How can two babies
live at the same time in one womb?
    – Do not ask lust for me now."

13 These are the words she spoke
    to Bṛhaspati, but he,
though mahā-illustrious, was uable
    to control his lust.

14 When he entered the unwilling lady,
    the baby in the womb spoke up:
Bhoḥ! Tāta! There is no space here
    for two! I occupied it first!

15 *Your semen will be wasted.*
    Do not hurt me.
Bṛhaspati did not heed the womb-child,
    and penetrated Mamatā,

16 Mamatā, the lovely-eyed lady.
As he did so, the wise
womb-child, anticipating
the moment of ejaculation,

17 Thrust his baby feet
at the womb's entrance,
blocking the semen
from the vaginal passage.

18 Prevented in this manner,
the sperm spilled out
and fell on the ground.
Illustrious Bṛhaspati said:

19 *Because you prevented me*
from an experience of pleasure
sought by all creatures,
may you live in perpetual darkness!

21 As a resulted of this curse,
Utathya's child, as refulgent
as Bṛhaspati himself, was born
blind. They called him
Dīrghatamas,
The One in Long Darkness.

22 The born-blind ṛṣi,
immensely learned, wise in the Vedas,
married a lovely Brahmin girl
named Pradveṣī.

23 She had a son Gautama –
and other sons who continued
noble Utathya's illustrious line.
But they were greedy and foolish.

24 Veda-learned, mahātmā Dīrghatmas
learnt from Surabhī's son
the practices of the cow-race
and publicly indulged in them.

25 The other ṛṣis of the āśrama
saw him overstep the limits
of what they held as decency,
and were indignant.

26 'This man is a pervert,'
they said, 'not fit for an āśrama.
He is unfit to stay with us.
Let us banish the scoundrel.'

27 They cast many more slanders
on Dīrghatamas. His wife,
having already had children,
became displeased with him.
To his wife Pradveṣī he said,
'Why do you dislike me?'

28 She replied, 'A husband is *bhartṛ,*
the supporter, for he supports;
he is *pati*, the protector,
for he protects his wife.
You neither support nor protect me.
noble born-blind ṛṣi,
I have supported you and your children.
I will not do so any longer."

29 Her words infuriated him.
He said to his wife and sons,
'Take me to the Kṣatriyas,
and you will be rich.'

30 'Brahmin,' replied Pradveṣī.
'I do not want riches
earned by you. I will be unhappy
if I did. Do as you like,
but, as far as I am concerned,
I cannot stay with you any more.'

31 'Then I lay down this rule,'
said Dīrghatamas – 'from today
every woman must stay with one husband
throughout her life.

32 Whether he is dead – or alive –
she must not seek union
with another man. If she does,
she will be counted corrupted.

33 If she does, no amount of wealth
will bring her happiness.
If she does, blame and stain
will attach to her all her life.'

The Brahmin lady heard this
and lost her temper; turning
to her sons, she said,
'Throw him in the Gaṅgā!'

34 Her greedy and stupid sons,
Gautama and the others,
said among themselves,
'Let's get rid of this blind old man,'

35 And they tied him to a log,
took him to the Gaṅgā
and casting him in the river;
the cruel culprits returned home.

36 As the log drifted on the currents
of the Gaṅgā, Dīrghatmas
passed along the borders
of many kingdoms.

37 And it so happened, one day
a pious rājā named Balin
saw the log drifting past
and approached it.

38 Balin, who was well-versed in dharma,
knew who it was,
rescued him from the river,
and took him to his palace.

39 'Noble ṛṣi,' he said, 'give me
a few sons by my wife,
sons who will be skilled in artha
and firm in dharma.'

40 The radiant Dīrghatmas agreed.
'So be it,' he said.
So the rājā sent his wife
Sudeṣṇā to the blind ṛṣi.

41 Knowing he was blind and old,
devī Sudesna sent her nurse instead.
The dharmātmā ṛṣi had eleven sons
by the Śūdra nurse.

42 Kākṣīvat was the eldest;
one day, while they were studying,
rājā Balin asked Dīrghatmas,
'Are these sons mine?'

43 'No,' replied the maharṣi, 'mine.
Kākṣīvat and others
are the sons I had
by a Śūdra woman.

44 Your foolish Sudeṣṇā,
because I was old and blind,
insulted me by substituting
for herself an old nurse.'

45 Balin placated the excellent ṛṣi Dīrghatmas,
and for the second time
asked his wife Sudeṣṇā
to go to the ṛṣi.

46 Dīrghatmas touched
the devī's body and said:
'You will give birth to energetic
and truth-speaking sons:

47 Aṅga, Baṅga, Kaliṅga,
Paṇḍra and Suhma;
five kingdoms will be named
after your five sons –

48 From Aṅga, Aṅga;
from Baṅga, Baṅga;
from Kaliṅga the kiṅgdom
of Kaliṅga :

49 From Puṇḍra, Puṇḍra;
from Suhma, Suhma.'
And in this way was Balin's
line perpetuated.

50 Many wise-in-dharma, mahā-powerful
and brave Kṣatriyas were born
from these Brahmins. Having heard this,
mother, do as you please."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-FIVE

1 Bhīṣma continued, "Let me place before you, mother, the best means of prepetuating the race of the Bhāratas.

2 Choose a merit-laden Brahmin,
offer him wealth,
let him procreate children
in the field of Vīcitravīrya"

3 Satyavatī smiled gently.
Shyly she said to Bhīṣma,
her words wavering a little
even as she spoke:

4 "Maha-muscled Bharata,
what you say is true.
Because I have faith in you,
I will tell you *my* plan

5 You are Dharma, you are Truth,
you are our Refuge. You know
what is permissible in a crisis of dharma,
you will not disapprove.

6 Listen to me, and decide, O bull-brave Bharata.
You may have heard of rājā Vasu –
I am his daughter,
born of his sperm in a fish-womb.

7 A wise-in-dharma fisher chief
pulled my mother out of the river,
and adopted me as his daughter.
My dharma-devoted father
had a boat, which I plied

8 For the benefit of pilgrims for dharma's sake.
One day (in my flush of youth)
the dharma-knowing supreme ṛṣi Parāśara wanted
to be ferried over the Yamunā.

9 We were mid-river when
that finest of ṛṣis, stirred
by kama, began speaking to me
sweetly about his lineage.

10 I was afraid of my father,
I was afraid of him too.
'Sir,' I said to him, 'I
am only a Niśāda's daughter.'
He persisted; I extracted a boon,
and satisfied his desire.

11 I was just a young girl.
O great Bharaṭa, his shining glory
overpowered me,
and fog obscured the region.

12 Before, my body exuded
a strong fish-smell,
but the ṛṣi removed it,
and gave me the fragrance I have now.

13 The muni said to me,
'Your child will born
on an island in this river,
yet you will remain a virgin.'

14 The child of my virginhood
was the son of Parāśara –
born-on-an-island, therefore
called Dvāipāyana.

15 Because that bhāgavan ṛṣi arranged the Vedas.
in four parts, he was called Vyāsa
the Compiler; and Kṛṣṇa
because he was dark-skinned.

16 Truthful, self-controlled,
defect-destroying ascetic,
he went away with his father
as soon as he was born.

17 If you and I implore him,
the incomparably lustrous ṛṣi,
he will procreate splendid sons
in the field of Vicitravīrya.

18 Before leaving he said to me,
Remember me, mother, in need,
and I will come. O mahā-muscled Bhīṣma,
should I summon him now?

19 If you approve, Bhīṣma,
and think him worthy, I know Vyāsa
of mahā-tapasyā will come and produce sons
in Vicitravīrya's field."

20 Bhīṣma heard the name of maharṣi Vyāsa,
joined his palms in añjali, and said:
"Learned is the man who looks
on dharma, learned the man
who looks on artha, learned he
who looks on kāma

21 Steadily and clearly, and
then acts – in such a manner
that dharma leads to better dharma,
artha to better artha, and
kāma to better kāma.
This is my belief, mother.

22 So I approve. What you say
is beneficial for us, our race,
and is agreeable to dharma.
No course could be better."

23 When Kālī-Satyavatī heard this
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
she lost no time
in mentally summoning Kṛṣna-Dvaipāyana.

24 He was meditating on the Vedas,
he left them instantly, and,
without anyone's knowing,
instantly stood in front of her.

25 She first offered him pūjā-respect
then with both arms embraced him:
milk gushed from her breasts,
wetting, anointing him.

26 Satyavatī, the Dāśa daughter,
wept, seeing him after
such a long time. And Vyāsa
her eldest son,

27 The mahā-ṛṣi,
seeing her weeping, washed
her eyes with cool water,
touched her feet and said:

28 "Mother, I am here
because you summoned me.
Command me, O you who know dharma,
I will do as you say."

29 The family purohita offered pūjā-respect
to maharṣi Vyāsa with mantras
in the traditional manner;
Vyāsa accepted the honour.

30 Pleased with the pūjā and mantras
he sat down; his mother
Satyavatī, seeing him seated
comfortably, as customary,

31 Made the required enquiries.
Then, turning to him, she said, "O *Kavi*,
my vision-seeing son, sons are indebted
equally to father and mother.

32 Father and mother have equal authority
over their sons.
If a father is lord, so is a mother.
Providence made you my eldest son,

33 Vicitravīrya my youngest.
He is Bhīṣma's brother
on his father's side, you are
Bhīṣma's brother on his mother's.

34 This is the way I see it,
I do not know how you feel.
Now, Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son,
is devoted to his vow,
and will not rule the kingdom,
nor marry and have children.

35 So, my defect-less son,
for the sake of your brother,
for the sake of Śāntanu's line,
for Bhīṣma's sake, for my sake;

36 For the sake of the affection
you have for all creatures,
for the sake of protecting people,
for the sake of kindness itself,
do as I say. Your younger brother
leaves behind two beautiful widows.

37 They are like daughters of the gods
They want dharma-approved children.
For the sake of our line have sons by them
worthy of the dynasty of Śāntanu."

38 "Satyavatī," replied Vyāsa,
"you know what is dharma
in this world and the next;
you are mahā-wise, you follow dharma.

39 With dharma in mind,
I will do as you say,
because what you say conforms
to Sanātana Dharma.

40 I will procreate, for my brother,
sons resembling Mitra
and Varuṇa. And I lay down
the following condition:

41 Order the two devīs to observe
the vow I mention – for one year.
This will purify them. No woman
must approach me otherwise."

42 "Act in such a way," she said,
"that they conceive quickly.
In a kingdom without a rājā
the people perish,
yajñas and other rituals become
fruitless, rains do not fall,
even the gods disappear
from such a kingdom.

43 My lord, *prabhu,* how can a rājā-less
kingdom be defended?
Make them conceive quickly.
Bhisma will safeguard the children."

44 "If I must father sons quickly,"
said Vyāsa, "let the wives vow
to overlook my ugliness
Let that be the condition.

45 If Kausalyā-Ambikā can stand my smell,
my fearful, stern looks,
my dress, my body,
she will have an excellent son."

46 Mahā-energetic-Vyāsa (said Vaiśampāyana);
then, turning again to Satyavatī, said:
"Let Ambikā, princess of Kosala,
in clean dress, and ornamented,

47 Expect me in her bed-chamber."
Saying this, he went away.
Satyavatī went to her daughter-in-law,
and said to her, in secret,

48 These words of dharma and artha,
"Princess of Kosala,
listen to me carefully. What I say
is in accordance with dharma.

49 Cursed is my fate that sees
the extinction of the Bharatas!
Because I grieved over this,
the end of his paternal line,

50 Wise Bhīṣma came to me and,
seeking to continue the line,
suggested a plan. My child,
everything is in your hands.
Help us! Restore the glory
of the vanishing Bharatas.

51 Lovely-hipped daughter-in-law!
Give birth to a god-like rājā,
a son who will bear the burden
of ruling this great kingdom."

52 And Satyavatī succeeded
in persuading that lady
of dharma to agree to an act
consistent with dharma.
After which, she fed Brahmins,
deva-ṛṣis and many other guests.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-SIX

1 When her daughter-in-law had performed her ritual bath of menstrual purification (continued Vaiśampāyana), Satyavatī took her to the bed-chamber, seated her on the bed, and said to her:

2 "Princess of Kosala, your husband
has an elder brother
who will come to you tonight.
Wait for him, do not fall asleep."

3 The lovely princess lay on the bed
as advised by her mother-in-law
and thought of Bhīṣma
and other great Kaurava heroes,

4 The truth-speaking ṛṣi who,
by the custom of *niyoga,*
had given his word, entered Ambikā's
bed-chamber brightly lit with lamps.

5 She saw his dark face,
his matted, coppery locks,
his flaming eyes, his beard;
devī Ambīka closed both her eyes.

6 He united with her
obeying his mother's fond wish,
The Kāśi princess was afraid,
she did not once look at him.

7 When he came out,
Satyavatī asked, "My son,
will the princess give birth
to a guṇa-wealthy son?"

8 Self-controlled, wise Vyāsa
replied to his mother,
"Her son will have the strength
of ten thousand elephants.

9 He will be learned,
he will be a rājarṣi.
He will be fortune-favoured,
he will be hugely powerful.

10 That mahā-ātmaned monarch
will have a hundred sons.
But he will be born blind –
the fault is his mother's."

11 Satyavati heard her son. "Tell me,"
she said, "you who are rich in tapasyā,
how can a blind man be a king,
a Kaurava monarch?

12 How can a blind rājā
protect his relatives and friends,
foster the fame of his fathers? –
Give us another son."

13 Mahā-illustrious Vyāsa replied, "So be it,"
and left. In due course,
a blind son was born
to the princess of Kosala.

14 O great Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana),
after getting her daughter-in-law's consent,
devī Satyavati for the second time
summoned maharṣi Vyāsa,

15 In the same manner. Vyāsa
appeared; in the same manner,
according to the custom,
he went to his brother's wife,

16 Ambālikā. She paled
seeing him, her face
became ashen with fear.
He saw her pale and trembling,

17 And Vyāsa, son of Satyavatī,
said to her:
"Since you have paled
seeing my ugliness,

18 May your son be pale.
Lovely-faced lady, the name
of your son will be
Pāṇḍu the Pale One."

19 Saying which, the bhagavan ṛṣi
came out and met
Satyavatī, who asked him
about the future of the child.

20 He told her the boy
would be sickly and pale.
Satyavatī heard this,
and asked for another son.

21 The maharṣi replied,
"So be it."
In the meantime, devī Ambālikā
gave birth to her son.

22 He shone, he had all
the auspicious marks – but he was pale.
This son later became father
of the brilliant-in-bowcraft Pāṇḍavas.

23 When her elder daughter-in-law Ambikā
was again in her fertile period,
Satyavatī urged her to go
to Vyāsa.

24 The celestially-lovely lady,
the Kāśi princess, recalling the maharṣi's looks
and his smelling body,
instead dressed a slave maid
who was lovely as an apsarā
with her own jewels and ornaments.

25 And Kāśi's daughter
sent her to Vyāsa.
As the ṛṣi entered, she welcomed him,
and honoured him.

26 With his permission, she attended on him
carefully, respectfully, and loved him secretly.
as he desired. The strict-vowed maharṣi
was delighted with her love-making.

27 Before leaving her bed, he said to her,
"Lovely lady, you will no more
be a maidservant. A dharmātmā son.
will be born to you,
most favoured by fortune,
of learned the most learned."

28 Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana's son
by this union was Vidura,
brother of Dhṛtārāṣṭra
and mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu.

29 The god Dharma
was himself born as Vidura
as a result of mahā-ātmaned Māṇḍavya curse.
Kāma and anger never
afflicted him. When Satyavatī
asked Vyāsa, he explained

30 How the elder sister-in-law Ambikā
had deceived him, and how
Vidura became a Śūdra woman's son.
Then he disappeared.

31 This is how the god-like princes,
enhancers of Kaurava glory,
were born in Vicitravīrya's field
by the ṛṣi Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-SEVEN

1 "What," asked Janamejaya, "did Dharma do
to deserve such a curse?
Who was the Brahma-ṛṣi
who cursed him into a Śudra womb?"

2 Vaiśampāyana replied: Māṇḍavya
was the Brahmin's name –
a vastly learned man, devoted
to dharma, truth, and tapasyā.

3 Both hands uplifted, he stood under a tree
at his āśrama entrance;
the mahāyogi was engaged
in a powerful vow of silence.

4 Many years passed like this.
Then one day, a gang of robbers
rushed into the āśrama,
running away with stolen goods.

5 Hot in pursuit came the king's
officers. O Janamejaya
The robbers entered the āśrama,
hid their loot,

6 And then hid themselves
before the guards arrived.
Not a moment too soon! –
The guards turned up,

7 And saw the ṛṣi
sitting at the entrance
in the posture described.
They asked:

8 "Good Brahmin,
did any thieves come this way?
Tell us quickly –
we have no time to lose."

9 He did not say a word,
that tapasyā-rich ṛṣi,
neither yes nor no,
to the king's officers.

10 The rājā's officers searched the āśrama,
found the loot,
and dragged out the robbers
who had hidden themselves.

11 Suspecting the muni,
they arrested him,
and along with the thieves
produced him before the rājā,

12 Who sentenced both
to execution. The officers
without thinking obeyed orders
and impaled the ṛṣi of mahā-tapasyā

13 On a *śūla*. With the thieves
and the muni on *śūlas*,
they recovered the stolen goods
and returned them to the king.

14 The dharmātmā ṛṣi, impaled
on the iron stake, passed
a long time without food,
but would not die.

15 He continued his tapasyā
on the *śūla*, he kept alive,
he drew other ṛṣis there
by the strength of his tapasyā.

16 They flocked there at night,
    in the shapes of birds,
they saw his tapasyā on the *śūla*
    and, disturbed,

17 They revealed their true forms.
    They asked, "Brahmin,
what is the crime for which
    you suffer on the *śūla*?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-EIGHT

1 That lion-among-munis
 replied to the tapasyā-wealthy munis:
"Who shall I blame?
 The blame is all mine."

2 The guards, seeing the ṛṣi
 still alive, after many days
went to the rājā
 and told him all that happened.

3 He listened to them,
 consulted his ministers,
and made every effort
 to placate the excellent ṛṣi

4 "Excellent ṛṣi," said the rājā,
 "in my ignorance
I have offended you – forgive me,
 do not be angry with me."

5 The rājā's words satisfied the ṛṣi
 (continued Vaiśampāyana)
who liked the king's words.
 So the king ordered

6 The *śūla* brought down,
 and himself tried to pull the stake
out of the ṛṣi's body –
 and failed.
He then had the stake
 cut off where it protruded.

7 Half-*śūla* stuck in him,
 the ṛṣi continued his tapasyā;
and many holy regions, inaccessible
 to others, he attained.

8 From that day, he was known
as Aṇīmāṇḍavya,
the Ṛṣi-with-the-Stake.
One day he approached Dharma,

9 Who was sitting
on his celestial seat;
gently he asked, "What was the dreadful deed
I unknowingly did

10 For which I suffered
such punishment? Tell me,
and tell me quickly.
Beware of the strength of my tapasyā."

11 "O tapasyā-wealthy one," replied Dharma,
"remember the butterfly
you once pierced with a grass-blade?
That karma has produced this fruit.

12 O Brahmin ṛṣi! The littlest act of kindness
multiplies in rewards;
likewise, any adharma
brings heavy punishment."

13 Aṇīmāṇḍavya asked: "How old was I
when I committed this crime?"
Dharmarājā replied:
"You were only a boy."

14 "It is written,"
said Aṇīmāṇḍavya,
"that no deed done by a child
under twelve is adharma;
till a boy reaches twelve,
he is not aware of dharma.

15 Venial was my crime, O Dharma,
terrible my punishment.
Worse than mass-murder, it is said,
is the killing of a single Brahmin.

16 Therefore, Dharma, be born a Śūdra!
And from this day onwards
I lay down the following dharma
of crime and punishment –

17 Below the age of fourteen
no one commits a crime;
only above the age of fourteen.
can a crime be committed."

18 Vaiśampāyana continued : This was the reason that Dharma was born as mahā-ātmaned Vidura from the womb of a Śūdra mother.

19 Vidura knew dharma and artha,
Vidura was free from greed and anger,
Vidura had the gift of foresight,
he was serene,
he was a well-wisher of the Kauravas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-NINE

1 With the birth of these three sons – Dhṛtārāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and mahā-ātmaned Vidura – Kurujāṅgala, Kurukṣetra and the Kuru dynasty waxed prosperous.

2 Full harvests
Lavish crops
Timely rains
Fruit-and-flower-
Laden trees

3 Happy creatures
Happy deer and birds
Sweet-smelling flowers and garlands
Sweet-tasting fruits

4 Merchants and craftsman
In the cities
The citizens brave
Learned, honest, smiling

5 No stealing
No adharma
Satya-Yuga
In the kingdom

6 Dharma-minded
Truth-devoted
Yajña-performing
People
Prospering
Loving each other

7 Without pride
Without anger and greed
Delighting in innocence
Pleasing each other
Guided by dharma

8 Hastināpura
City of the Kauravas
With hundreds of doors
Hundreds of windows
Ocean-like city
Resplendent

9 With innumerable palaces
Innumerable mansions
Like the city of Indra
Citizens sporting
In its rivers, lakes,
Tanks, gardens, groves,
Enchanting woods.

10 The southern Kauravas
Rivals of the northern
Mixed in the company of gods
Deva-ṛṣis and Cāraṇas

11 No man parsimonious
No woman a widow
In the land of plenty
The land of the Kauravas.

12 Water-filled wells
Tree-full groves
Wealth-filled houses of Brahmins
City of perpetual festivities.

13 Ruled by noble Bhīṣma
(O Janamejaya)
The kingdom abounded in
Dharma-protected yajña-poles
Meant for sacrifices

14 Bhīṣma set in motion
The wheel of dharma
Foreigners poured in
The population increased

15 Joy filled the hearts
Of all citizens
When they witnessed
The sacred ceremonies
Of the three mahā-ātmaned princes

16 The two words heard
Repeatedly in houses
Of nobles and commoners
Were *Give* and *Eat*.

17 And Bhīṣma brought up
Dhṛtārāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu
and mahā minded Vidura as if
they were his own sons.

18 Following the saṁskāras,
they vowed brahmacarya,
they studied, they were trained
in athletics and manual labour,

19 Archery, horsemanship,
mace-duel, sword-fight,
elephant-riding,
and the essentials of ethics.

20 They studied history,
the Purāṇas and other subjects;
they learned the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
they were skilled and scholarly.

21 Mighty Pāṇḍu excelled
in archery;
and Dhṛtārāṣṭra was acknowledged master
of manly strength.

22 None in the three worlds
    excelled Vidura in dharma;
what he knew about dharma
    was incomparable.

23 And when the world's countries
    saw the Śāntanu dynasty recover
its former glory,
    they said:

24 *Highest*
    among mothers of heroes –
    are the daughters of the king of Kāśi;
Highest
    among the countries of the world –
    is Kurujāṅgala;
Highest
    among knowers of Dharma –
        is Bhīṣma;
Highest
    among the world's cities –
        is Hastināpura, city of elephant-gates.

25 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, because blind,
    could not become king;
nor Vidura, because Śūdra-born;
    so rājā Pāṇḍu ruled the kingdom.

26 One day, wisest among statesmen
    Bhīṣma,
noble son of Gaṅgā,
    said to Vidura, devoted to dharma:

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-TEN

1 "The Bharata dynasty,
famed for nobility and accomplishments,
has all along in its history
subdued the world's rulers.

2 Many mahātmā ancestors,
many men of dharma
established and continued
this illustrious dynasty.

3 Satyavāti, mahā-ātmaned Kṛṣna-Vyāsa
have raised you
in the hope that you three brothers
will continue the line.

4 It is your duty,
as it is mine, to see
that the dynasty grows
in strength like the ocean.

5 I have heard that the Yādava princess,
the daughter of Subala,
and the princess of Madra are ideal
for union with our dynasty.

6 They are fine Kṣatriya ladies,
they are beautiful, noble-born;
they are perfectly suitable
for alliance with us Kṣatriya heroes.

7 My son, wise Vidura,
it is my view we should
choose them to continue our line.
What do you think?"

8 Vidura replied:
"You are our father, our mother,
our greatest guru;
do what you think is right,
and best for our dynasty."

9 Certain Brahmins gave Bhīṣma the information (continued Vaiśampāyana) that the daughter of king Subala, Gāndhārī, by propitiating Hara-Śiva, destroyer of the eyes of Bhaga, had obtained a special boon,

10 To the effect that she would have a hundred sons. As soon as he heard this, Bhīṣma, grandsire of the Kauravas,

11 Sent envoys to the king of Gāndhāra. Subala was unwilling, because Dhṛtārāṣṭra was blind.

12 Later, taking into account the high birth, the fame and noble conduct of the Kaurava dynasty, he relented, and bestowed his daughter, Gāndhārī, on Dhṛtārāṣṭra.

13 When Gāndhārī heard
the husband chosen for her
by her parents was blind
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

14 She took a silk cloth,
folded it, and bandaged her eyes.
The husband-devoted lady
did not wish to see

15 Her husband's disability, out of regard
for her husband. The son
of the raja of Gāndhāra,
her brother Śakuni,

16 Took her, young, lovely,
sweet-behaving, to the palace
of the Kauravas, and formally
bestowed her on Dhṛtārāṣṭra.

17 Bhīṣma solemnised the marriage.
Śakuni gave his sister
costly dresses, and, honoured by Bhīṣma,
returned to his capital.

18 O great Bharata, O Janamejaya,
so sweet, so gentle,
so solicitous was lovely-thighed Gāndharī
that all the Kauravas were pleased with her.

19 She never even mentioned
the names of other men.
Devoted to her husband,
she pleased her elders
with her courteous conduct,
her strictly-kept vows.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-ELEVEN

1 A Yadava chief named Śūra
was the father of Vasudeva;
his daughter was Pṛthā,
a paragon of loveliness.

2 Truth-speaking Śura gave Pṛthā,
his first-born child, to Kuntibhoja,
the childless son
of his father's sister,

3 And his cousin and good friend,
in accordance with a promise
he had once made
to the mahā-ātmaned Kuntibhoja

4 Pṛthā, adopted by Kuntibhoja,
offered pūjā-respect to gods and guests
and looked after Brahmins.
Once, with patient service,

5 She succeeded in pleasing
Durvāsas, a strict-vowed,
irascible Brahmin, vastly learned
in the secrets of dharma.

6 He divined her coming dilemma;
to protect her dharma
he gave her a mantra
to invoke any god she desired.

7 *The glory of whichever god*
you invoke with this mantra
will give you the sons
you desire.

8 She remembered the Brahmin's words,
and one day, being curious,
while still a young virgin,
she invoked the sun-god Arka.

9 The Sun stood in front of her!
Radiant Bhāskara,
Sustainer of the universe!
Struck with wonder,
she stood there, speechless,
faultless-featured Kuntī.

10 Vivasvat the sun-god
spoke to her:
"Black-eyed lady,
I am here.
What do you desire?

11 I am bidden in the mantra of the ṛṣi
I am the Sun.
Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one!
I am come to give you a son."

12 "Foe-destroying lord!"
said Kuntī.
"A Brahmin gave me this mantra.
I called you
only because I wanted to test it.

13 It was my mistake. Forgive me.
I bow my head at your feet.
No matter how guilty,
a woman deserves pardon."

14 "I know," replied Sūrya,
"of Durvāsas' boon.
Throw away your fear –
be one with me.

15 You invoked me, lovely girl,
My summoning must not fail.
Timid one, if you send me away now,
grievous blame will fall on you."

16 Because she was a shy virgin
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Vivasvat the Sun in many ways soothed her
trying to remove her qualms,

17 The timid lovely-thighed girl was afraid of relatives,
she was a virgin, and she resisted.
O bull-brave Bharata,
Arka the sun god said to her:

18 "Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one,
lovely-eyebrowed, lovely-speaking one,
the son you will bear
will have Aditi's divine ear-rings,

19 He will be born with my armour.
No weapons will pierce it,
nothing will harm him,
no one will withstand him.
He will gift to Brahmins
whatever they ask.

20 He will be strong-minded
and noble. Even if I ask him
to do anything ignoble,
he will refuse. He will be himself.

21 By my grace, no blame will attach
to you, O rānī,
for uniting with me."
Bhagavān Sūrya said this to princess Kuntī,

22 Tapana, light of the cosmos,
said this,
and had intercourse with her.
Of that intercourse
was born a god-like
radiant son,

23 Karṇa,
born with armour
welded to his body!
Fortunate Karṇa!
Divinely-lustrous Karṇa!
Auspicious-marked Karṇa!
Karṇa,
hero with a face
made radiant with ear-rings!

24 Refulgent Tapana,
radiant sun-god Sūrya
restored to Kuntī her virginity
and returned to heaven.

25 Shame overcame the Vṛṣni virgin
when she saw her baby.
She began thinking deeply
on what best should be done.

26 Afraid of what her friends
and relatives would say,
she took her mahā-powerful baby
and floated him down the river.

27 Rādhā's mahā-illustrious husband picked up
the child cast on the waters.
Rādhā's husband Adhiratha
and Radha reared the boy.

28 They named him Vasuṣeṇa
or One-born-with-wealth,
because he was born
with flesh ear-rings and armour.

29 He grew up tall and strong,
expert in all weapons;
he worshipped the sun
from dawn to midday,
his back was tanned
by the light of the setting sun.

30 During the time of his japa-meditation
the noble and intelligent Vasuṣeṇa
refused nothing to any Brahmin
who asked for his help.

31 One day, in the guise of a Brahmin,
Āditya the Sun came to him in a dream.
Āditya said to him
Karṇa, listen to me.

32 *Tomorrow Vāsava-Indra will approach you,*
disguised as a Brahmin.
If he asks anything from you,
deny it. Refuse him.

33 *He has planned to take away*
your ear-rings and armour.
I say this to warn you.
Remember my words.

34 Karṇa replied:
"If Śakra-Indra comes to me,
as you say, disguised as a Brahmin,
how will it be possible for me
to refuse a twice-born one?

35 Brahmins are to be honoured
even more than one's well-wishing gods.
Even if I see through this ruse, I cannot refuse
the god of gods Indra,

36 Sūrya said:
If that is your wish, O hero,
be certain you take in exchange
the all-annihilating śakti-missile
Indra will offer as a boon.

37 Saying this (Vaiśampāyana went on)
Sūrya disappeared.
Karṇa woke,
and began to wonder on his dream.

38 And mahā-radiant Indra did come, one day,
in the guise of a Brahmin.
He asked as alms
Karna's flesh-ear-rings and armour.

39 Karṇa honoured him, and,
tearing off his ear-rings and armour,
with both his hands
he handed them to Indra.

40 Lord-of-gods Indra accepted them,
and was pleased with Karṇa's gift.
Vāsava-Indra smiled to himself
and said:

41 "Aho! A brave deed indeed!
I have not seen any god,
Dānava, yakṣa, uraga, rāksasa
as brave as you.

42 Who can ever perform such a feat?"
He added:
"I am pleased with you.
Ask any boon you like."

43 Karṇa said:
"Bhagavān!
I want your infallible śakti-missile
that can destroy all enemies."
Surapati-Indra gave Karṇa
the śakti-missile saying:

44 "Whoever you wish to kill
with this *śakti* – god or anti-god,
uraga-serpent or rākṣasa,
or gandharva – he will die."

45 First he was Vasuṣeṇa.
Because he hewed his flesh armour
off his body he became
Vaikartana the Cutter.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-TWELVE

1 Kuntibhoja's daughter, Pṛthā,
had large eyes, was devoted
to dharma, was accomplished
in every way, most firm of faith,
a respository of
sattva-rūpa-guṇa.

2 She was lovely and talented,
famed for her beauty.
Because she had all the feminine qualities,
many kings asked for her hand.

3 Her father rājā Kuntibhoja,
decided to hold a svayamvara
to which he would invite
all suitors for his daughter.

4 Discerning Kuntī saw,
among the assembled suitors,
Pāṇḍu, lion-among-rājās,
foremost of the Bharatas.

5 Bull-eyed
Lion-proud
Broad-chested
Sun-splendoured
He stood there
Over-shadowing the other rājās.

6 A second Puraṁdara-Indra!
Lovely Kuntī
Saw him
Great Pāṇḍu
And trembled
With kāma.

7 She took shy steps forward.
She trembled slightly.
She lifted the wedding garland
and placed it round his neck.

8 The other kings rose,
mounted their elephants,
chariots and horses,
and returned to their kingdoms.

9 Her father solemnised the rites
in the prescribed manner.
Pāṇḍu, descendant of Kuru,
married the daughter of Kuntibhoja.

10 Blessed with good fortune,
like Paulamī-Śacī
were Pāṇḍu and Kuntī.
After the wedding ceremony,

11 Indra-among-rājās Kuntibhoja lavished wealth
on Pāṇḍu. Then, O Janamejaya,
Kuntibhoja sent Pāṇḍu
back to his capital,

12 Accompanied by a galaxy
of bannered and flagged followers,
Brahmins singing his praises,
great ṛṣis blessing him,

13 All the way back.
When rājā Pāṇḍu reached his capital,
he installed his wife Kuntī
as queen of his dynasty.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-THIRTEEN

1 After some time had passed,
foresighted Bhīṣma
thought of finding a second wife
for Pāṇḍu.

2 Taking with him Brahmins,
ṛṣis and elderly ministers,
and a four-fold army,
he went to the king of Madra.

3 The king of Madra, Śalya,
getting news of his coming,
received him with great respect
in his majestic capital,

4 Offered him a white seat,
washed his feet with water,
made the ritual *arghya* offering,
and asked him the reason for his visit.

5 Bhīṣma, guardian of Kaurava honour,
said to the rājā of Madra,
"O great foe-subduer,
I have come for a bride.

6 I have heard of your sister,
shining, sweet-natured Mādrī.
I am here because
I want her for Pāṇḍu.

7 It is right that your dynasty
be joined in marriage with ours.
Rājā of Madra,
what do you think?"

8 King Śalya replied to Bhīṣma,
"I cannot think, O Bhīṣma,
of any person more fit
to be our bridegroom than Pāṇḍu.

9 However, we, in our family,
have a custom that is strictly followed.
Call it good or bad,
we happen to follow it.

10 Everyone has heard of this custom.
You, I am sure, know of it too.
Therefore, noble Bhīṣma, it is not right
you should say *Give us your sister*.

11 This is our family dharma.
A family dharma must be observed.
This is the reason, O Bhīṣma
I cannot commit my sister . . ."

12 Bhisma replied to the rājā of Madra,
"Your dharma is excellent, O rājā,
it should be followed. Self-born Brahmā
himself advises its observance.

13 Your ancestors followed it.
Why should there be anything wrong with it?
King Śalya, wise-thinking people
have approved of this custom."

14 Shining Bhīṣma said this,
Bhīṣma, Gāñga's son, said this,
and presented to Śalya
gold, minted and pure,

15 Precious stones of many colours,
elephants, horses, chariots,
expensive cloth and jewellery,
gems, pearls, and lapis lazuli.

16 Śalya joyfully accepted these,
and gave his sister in marriage,
resplendently-ornamented,
to Pāṇḍu

17 Bhīṣma, son of Gaṅgā.
the great ocean-seeking river,
accepted her for Pāṇḍu, and took her
to Hastināpura, the elephant-gated city.

18 An auspicious day was chosen,
and on the *muhūrta*
suggested by the wise and prescient,
Pāṇḍu married Mādrī.

19 After the ceremony,
the great descendant of the Kauravas –
took his beautiful wife
to her gorgeously-appointed palace.

20 Then, O Janamejaya, the excellent rājā
abandoned himself to dalliance
with his two lovely wives,
Kuntī and Mādrī.

21 After thirty nights, rājā Pāṇḍu,
the great Kuru monarch,
set out from his capital
on a world-conquering campaign.

22 First he praṇāma-ed Bhīṣma
and other elders of the palace.
He bid farewell to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
They granted him permission.

23 He performed the necessary rites.
At the auspicious time,
Pāṇḍu set out to subdue the world.
Everyone blessed him

24 As he passed, with an army
of elephants, horses, and chariots.
Pāṇḍu, god-like monarch,
had determined to conquer the world.

25 He marched against his enemies
with an invincible army.
First, going eastwards, mighty Pāṇḍu
subdued the Daśārṇas.

26 Then, leading his army
of countless elephants, cavalry,
foot-soldiers and chariot-heroes,
flying multi-coloured pennants,

27 He quelled Dīrgha, Magadha's king,
who had boasted of his prowess
and routed many chiefs. He stormed
Dīrgha's capital, Rājagṛha, killed him,

28 Ransacked his treasury, appropriated
his chariots and animals,
marched next against Mithilā,
humbled the Kṣatriyas of Videha;

29 Subjugated next Kāśī, Suhma,
and Puṇḍra His military strength
and personal prowess spread
Kaurava fame far and wide.

30 His arrows
His lustrous weapons
were flames!
Flames that burnt
his enemies!
The great conflagration
was Pāṇḍu,
the foe-chastiser!

31 And with this army
he humbled all of them;
he made them work
in the service of Kaurava glory.

32 Defeated, they looked up to him,
even as the minor gods
look up to the single over-ruler,
Puraṁdara-Indra.

33 The kings of the world came
and did añjali before him;
they lavished gifts on him;
gold, gems,

34 Precious stones, pearls,
coral, silver,
the finest cows and horses,
elephants, chariots,

35 Mules, camels, buffaloes,
goats and sheep,
shawls, rare and lovely gems;
raṅkava-carpets. He took them.

36 To Hastināpura, his capital,
to the great rejoicing
of his loyal subjects,
and the city-dwellers.

37 "Extinct would have been
Kaurava glory – but for Pāṇḍu.
Extinct the fame of Śāntanu
and Bharata – but for Pāṇḍu.

38 Those who had previously looted
the wealth of the Kauravas
now pay tribute to Pāṇḍu,
Lion of Hastināpura."

39 Such were the words
of the ministers and citizens
of Pāṇḍu's kingdom, restored
to confident rejoicing.

40 On the outskirts of Hastināpura,
Bhīṣma and other Kauravas
came personally to welcome him.
Delighted, they noted

41 The wealth carried by Pāṇḍu's
innumerable attendants –
they saw all manner of wealth;
elephants, horses,

42 Chariots, cattle, camels,
and a long line of animals
as far as the eye could see,
all loaded with wealth.

43 The restorer of Kausalyā's joy
fell at Bhīṣma's feet;
he acknowledged the greetings
of all citizens in the proper manner.

44 And Bhīṣma shed tears of joy,
seeing his ward return
triumphant after the subjugation
of all the world's kingdoms.

45 Hundreds of conches blew!
Kettledrums and trumpets sounded!
Pāṇḍu had returned victorious!
Pāṇḍu had made the citizens rejoice!

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-FOURTEEN

1 At Dhṛtārāṣṭra's command (continued Vaiśampāyana), king Pāṇḍu offered the wealth he had won by the prowess of his military skill to Bhīṣma, Satyavatī, and his mothers Ambikā and Ambālikā.

2 He sent a part of that wealth
to Vidura.
Dharmātmā Pandu distributed more wealth
among friends and relatives.

3 Pāṇḍu pleased Bhīṣma,
Satyavatī and the Kosala princesses
by offering them wealth won
by the prowess of his arms.

4 Even as Paulamī-Śacī is happy
embracing her son Jayanta,
Kausalyā was happy
embracing bull-brave Pandu.

5 With the wealth Dhṛtārāṣṭra
performed sacrifices equalling,
in splendour and merit-earning,
a hundred aśvamedhas.

6 Then Pāṇḍu decided to relax.
With his two wives
Kuntī and Mādrī he retired
to the forest.

7 He left his splendid palace,
he left his luxurious bed.
He lived in the forest,
content with hunting.

8 He roamed at will
on the green and grassy slopes
of the southern Himalayas,
mantled with huge śāla-trees.

9 He roamed in the forests
with Kuntī and Mādrī
like Indra's elephant Airāvata sporting
with two she-elephants.

10 And the forest-dwellers
thought he, armed with sword,
bow and arrows, encased in armour,
was indeed a god,

11 A god with two wives.
On Dhṛtarāṣṭra's orders,
they supplied him all the pleasures
he needed in his retirement.

12 In the meantime, Bhīṣma,
Gañgā's son, heard that king Devaka
had a young and lovely daughter
born by a Śūdra wife.

13 Bhīṣma brought her
from her father's palace, and married her
to Vidura,
high-thinking Vidura.

14 Vidura, descendant of Kuru,
had sons by her
as brilliant and modest
as he was himself.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-FIFTEEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: One hundred sons were born to Dhṛtārāṣṭra by Gāndhārī. By a Vaiśya woman he had a hundred-and-first.

2 Pāṇḍu, by his two wives Kuntī and Mādrī, had five sons, all mahā-chariot-heroes; they were actually children procreated by gods for the perpetuation of the Kaurava dynasty.

3 "O best of the twice-born," asked Janamejaya, "how did Gāndhārī give birth to a hundred sons? How many years did it take? How long did they live?

4 How did he have his hundred-and-first son by his Vaiśya wife? What was Dhṛtārāṣṭra's attitude to his loving, faithful and wife Gāndhārī ?

5 How were the five sons of Pāṇḍu born, whom you have described as mahā-chariot-heroes? – Why was mahātmā Pāṇḍu cursed by a ṛṣi?

6 Tell me all this in detail, O tapasyā-wealthy one. I am never tired of listening to your accounts of my friends and kinsmen."

7 It so happened that one day
(Vaiśampāyana replied)
Gāndhārī attended to tired and hungry
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, who gave her a boon

8 To the effect that she would have
a hundred sons resembling her husband.
Some time after this,
she conceived by Dhṛtārāṣṭra;

9 For two years she carried
the seed in her womb,
and her anxiety increased
because delivery did not occur.

10 She heard Kuntī had given birth
to a son, shining like the dawn.
Maddened by the delay in her delivery
(sorrow made her lose her senses),

11 She struck hard at her womb
in a fury of violence.
(She did not say a word of this
to her husband Dhṛtārāṣṭra),

12 And she was delivered instantly
of a hard mass of flesh
resembling an iron ball
that her womb had nourished for two years.

13 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa heard of this
and hurried to her.
Vyāsa, best among ascetics,
saw that ball of hard flesh.

14 And he said to her, "Daughter of Subala,
what have you done?"
And Gāndhārī revealed the truth
to the effulgent ascetic,

15 "I heard Kuntī gave birth
to a son, shining like the sun;
in grief,
I struck at my womb.

16 You granted me a boon once,
that I would have a hundred sons.
Instead of a hundred sons,
I have this lump of flesh."

17 "My words are never frustrated,"
replied Vyāsa."Daughter of Subala
I do not lie even when joking –
why should my boon ever fail?

18 Take a hundred jars.
Fill them with ghee.
Store them in a secret place.
Sprinkle cool water on this ball."

19 So sprinkled, the ball of flesh
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
broke into many parts,
each about the size of a thumb.

20 It kept on splitting, until
after some time the parts.
numbered exactly
one hundred and one.

21 These were placed in the ghee-
filled jars, carefully
stored in a secret place,
and a watch kept over them.

22 Vyāsa instructed Subala's daughter Gāndhārī
to open the lids of the jars
only after two full years
had elapsed.

23 So instructing, and arranging,
shining, bhagavān Vyāsa
left for the Himavant mountains,
there to continue his meditation.

24 Duryodhana was born first
from one of those jars.
(In order of birth,
Yudhiṣṭhira was the eldest).

25 News of Duryodhana's birth
reached Bhīṣma and wise Vidura
The day proud Duryodhana was born
was also mahā-muscled Bhīṣma's birthday.

26 Immediately after birth,
Duryodhana, son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
bleated and brayed
like an ass.

27 And asses, vultures, jackals
broke into peals of noise;
strong winds blew,
fanning fierce fires.

28 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, frightened,
summoned Brahmins to his side;
he summoned Bhīṣma, Vidura,
friends, kinsmen, and other Kauravas,

29 And said:
"Yudhiṣṭhira is the eldest, I grant,
and the dynasty's heir.
I acknowledge this.

30 After him, my son Duryodhana . . .
But will he also become king?
Think on this, O wise ones.
Tell me what is right."

31 Even as he spoke these words,
O Janamejaya,
jackals and other flesh-eating animals
howled,
howled incessantly.

32 They heard these omens,
and the assembled Brahmins,
together with mahā-minded Vidura,
said:

33 "O rājā, the omens
portend something fearful –
since they appear at the birth
of your eldest son,

34 They point to him as the destroyer
of your dynasty. Disown him,
O bull-brave Bharata!
Catastrophe will result otherwise.

35 Ninetynine sons are still yours
if you disown him.
Great Bharata, if you wish well
of the Bharatas, disown him.
If you wish your family's good,
the world's good, disown him.

36 It is written :
For the sake of the family,
let an individual be sacrificed;
for the sake of the village,
let a family be sacrificed;
for the sake of the country,
let a village be sacrificed;
for the sake of the ātman,
let the whole world be sacrificed."

37 These words of advice were given
by Vidura and the Brahmins.
But rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra loved his son.
He rejected their advice.

38 Within a month, one hundred sons
were born to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
In addition to these,
he had a daughter.

39 During the period of advanced pregnancy
of Gāndhārī, a Vaiśya woman
was engaged to attend on
mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra

40 That year Dhṛtarāṣṭra
had by her a brilliant,
illustrious son, later named
Yuyutsu Karaṇa.

41 In this manner were born
a hundred sons to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
all great heroes and mahā-chariot-fighters,
a daughter,
and Yuyutsu, the Vaiśya-woman's son.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-SIXTEEN

1 Janamejaya said:
"You have explained the births
of the hundred sons
as a result of Vyāsa's boon –
but what about the daughter?

2 Noble ṛṣi, defectless one, you tell me
over and above the hundred
was another, Yuyutsu, Vaiśya-born;
and, of course, the daughter.
The boon was: *Gāndhārī*
will have a hundred sons.

3 Those were the words of Vyāsa,
O mahā-ṛṣi of incomparable lustre.
Bhagavan, revered one, how can you say then
that a daughter also was born?

4 The ball of flesh was divided
into a hundred parts,
and Gāndhāri, daughter of Subala,
was not pregnant a second time.

5 How then was Duḥśalā born?
O Brahma-ṛṣi,
explain this to me.
My curiosity is great."

6 Vaiśampāyana replied:
A good question, your majesty.
Let me explain it all.
Vyasa personally sprinkled the ball
with cool water,

7 And began dividing it.
As he divided the parts,
the nurse one by one placed them
in the ghee-filled jars.

8 Meanwhile, lovely-limbed Gāndhārī,
strict-vowed Gāndhārī,
desirous suddenly
of having a daughter,

9 Thought : *It is certain*
I will have a hundred sons.
The muni has promised it.
It cannot be otherwise.

10 *But only if I have a daughter*
over and above the hundred sons,
will my joy
be complete.

11 *My husband will then attain*
worlds meant for fathers
who have sons by daughters. And every mother
has a special fondness for a son-in-law.

12 *If I have a daughter*
and my hundred sons,
my joy will include sons
and a daughter,
my joy
will then be complete.

13 *O my penances,*
bear fruit!
O charity,
bear fruit!
Bear fruit,
O homa!
Respect shown to gurus
bear fruit!
Give me
a daughter.

14 Kṛṣna-Dvāipayana-Vyāsa meanwhile was busy
dividing the ball of flesh.
He counted one hundred pieces,
and said to Subala's daughter:

15 "Here are your hundred sons,
exactly as I promised,
Here is an extra piece –
this has the power to give you a daughter's son.

16 From this piece will be born
an auspicious daughter."
Vyāsa of mahā-tapasyā had another ghee-filled jar
brought specially for this piece.

17 And that, O Janamejaya,
is how the daughter Duḥśalā
was born. What else, O Indra-among-rājās,
would you like to know?

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-SEVENTEEN

1 Janamejaya said: "Give me the names of all the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra, beginning with the eldest, in the order is which they were born.

2 Vaiśampāyana replied:
Duryodhana, Yuyutsu, Duḥśāsana,
Duḥsaha, Duḥśala, Jalasaṃdha, Sama, Saha;

3 Vinda, Anuvinda, Durdharṣa, Subāhu,
Duṣpradharṣaṇa,
Durmarṣaṇa, Durmukha, Duṣkarṇa, Karṇa;

4 Viviṁśati, Vikarṇa, Śala, Sattva, Sulocana,
Citra, Upacitra, Citrākṣa, Cārucitraśarasana;

5 Durmada, Durvigāha, Vivitsu, Vikaṭānana,
Urunābha, Sunābha, Nanda, Upananda;

6 Citrabāṇa, Citravarman, Suvarman, Durvirocana,
Ayobābhu, Mahābāha, Citraṅga, Citrakuṇḍala;

7 Bhīmavega, Bhīmabala, Balaki, Balavardhana,
Ugrāyudha, Suṣeṇa, Kuṇḍodara, Mahodara;

8 Citrayudha, Niṣāṅgī, Pāśī, Vṛṇdāraka, Dṛḍhavarman,
Dṛḍhakṣatra, Somakīrti, Anūdara;

9 Dṛḍhasaṁdha, Jarāsaṁdha, Satyasaṁdha, Sadaḥsuvāk,
Ugraśravas, Ugrasena, Senāi, Duṣparājaya;

10 Aparājita, Paṇḍitaka, Viśālāksa, Durādhara,
Dṛḍhahasta, Suhasta, Vātavega, Suvarcā;

11 Ādityaketu, Bahvāsī, Nāgadatta, Ugrayāyī, Kavacī,
Krathana, Daṇḍī, Daṇḍodhara, Dhanurgraha;

12 Ugra, Bhīmaratha, Vīrabahu, Alolupa, Abhaya,
Raudrakarman, Dṛḍharathāśraya,

13 Anāḍhṛsya, Kuṇḍobhedī, Virāvin, Pramatha
Shining with marvellous armour and eaṛnings,
Pramāthin, Dīrgharoma;

14 Dīrghabābhu, mighty-armed Vyūḍhoru,
Kanakadhvaja,
Kuṇḍāśin, Virajā – and Duḥśalā was his daughter.

15 This is the full list
of his hundred sons,
and the daughter born to him
by a Vaiśya woman.

16 They were all great heroes,
all skilled in the arts of war,
they knew all the Vedas,
they were expert in all weapons.

17 Suitable wives were chosen
for them at the proper time,
after Dhṛtarāṣṭra personally
examined and approved the selection.

18 And his daughter Duḥśalā
was given by Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in marriage to Jayadratha
according to the established rites.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 Janamejaya said:
"You are a Brahmā-speaker!
From your lips I have heard
the splendid recital of the names
of Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons.

2 You have recited their names
in the order of their births.
O Brahmin, I am grateful.
Tell me now about the Pāṇḍavas.

3 When reciting the genealogies
of gods, anti-gods, and humans,
you said that the Indra-powerful mahā-ātmaned
Pāṇḍavas were projections of gods.

4 I would like to know more
about these gods, and their achievements,
from the time they were born.
Vaiśampāyana, tell me about them."

5 Vaiśampāyana said:
One day rājā Pāṇḍu, wandering
in that deer-filled forest,
saw a deer, leader of a herd,
mounting its mate in *maithuna*-dharma.

6 He shot five swift
gold-tipped, gold-feathered arrows
at them, as soon
as he spotted them.

7 O rājā, the deer was really the son of a ṛṣi,
a mahā-radiant ascetic;
he was engaged in intercourse
with his deer-wife.

8 The arrows struck him.
He fell down, wounded,
uttering cries of human pain.
Tears welled in his eyes.

9 The deer said, "Even lust-filled
and anger-maddened men,
criminal men, senseless men
would not be so cruel.

10 Impulse is inferior to discipline,
discipline should prevail over impulse.
Wise men refrain from placing impulse
above the sway of discipline.

11 And you, O Bhārata, born
in a dynasty noted for dharma,
how could you let your kama and greed
overpower your good sense?"

12 To which Pāṇḍu replied,
"Kings kill deer as easily
as they kill foes. You are foolish.
Who are you to rebuke me?

13 Openly or secretly,
your species is killed.
This is the dharma of rājās.
Who are you to rebuke me?

14 The great ṛṣi Agastya
hunted deer and killed them
in the great forest and offered them
to the gods;

15 Also, Agastya used deer-fat
for his ritual sacrifices.
I know the dharma in these matters;
who are you to rebuke me?"

16 "Defenceless enemies," the deer answered,
"are not shot arrows at.
There is a time for killing;
a special time when it may be praised."

17 "Aware or unprepared," said Pāṇḍu,
"deer are killed; they are killed
in all manner of ways.
Who are you to rebuke me?"

18 "O rājā," the deer said,
"I do not blame you
for hunting deer; nor do I
blame you for wounding me.
Could you not have waited
till my intercourse was over?

19 Intercourse is pleasureable to all,
intercourse is productive of life.
Which learned man will kill
a deer in the act of intercourse?

20 O Indra-among-rājās,
I had mounted my mate, joyfully,
to beget offspring.
Your deed put an end to my hopes.

21 You are a Puru, a noble Puru, mahārāja.
You are a mighty Kuru.
You should not have allowed yourself
to do what you did.

22 It was a cruel karma!
It deserves rebuke!
It is terrible! It is an act of adharma!
It is criminal!
It cannot bring you heaven.

23 You know the pleasure
that enjoying women brings;
you know what the śāstras say –
because you are like a god!
What made you do such a thing,
totally undeserving of heaven?

24 Your duty, great king, is to punish
those guilty of cruel deeds,
those who violate the threefold path
of dharma, artha and kāma.

25 What did I do, O finest of men,
that you should kill me? –
I, a deer-ṛṣi
subsisting on roots and fruits.

26 I lived in the forest,
I was at peace with all.
Since you have killed me,
may you be cursed!

27 Because you were cruel
to intercoursing lovers,
may death strike you
in the act of passionate intercourse!

28 My name is Kiṁdama, I am a muni,
I practise tapasyā in the forest;
I coupled with my mate here
to avoid being surprised by men.

29 I roam the deep forest
with female deer, freely.
Brahmin-killing is not your crime
(you did not know me).

30 Killing a deer in the heat of kāma is your crime.
Foolish man! May you suffer
the same fate that I suffered!
May you die in heat.

31 When you go in the heat of kāma
to enjoy the woman you love,
may my death be yours –
may you go to the land of the dead!

32 May the woman also join you –
with love and bhakti –
in the land of the dead,
the woman you sought to enjoy.

33 As I was plunged into grief
in the height of my pleasure,
may you be plunged into grief
in the height of your pleasure."

34 Saying this (added Vaiśampāyana)
the sorrowing deer died.
Pāṇḍu, briefly, was stricken
with inconsolable grief.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 When the deer died, rājā Pāṇḍu
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
regretted his deed; like sorrowing friends,
he and his wives wept.

2 Pāṇḍu said:
"Noble blood is of little help.
Deluded by passions, the best
of men turn wicked, and reap
the punishment of their karma.

3 My father was deep in dharma,
his father was too,
But kāma was his ruin, he died
while still a youth.

4 And in the field of his lust
I was sown
by a truth-honouring ṛṣi,
bhagavān Kṛṣna-Dvaipāyana.

5 And I am a victim of the hunt!
My mind is full of killing,
shooting down deer.
O the gods have forsaken me!

6 Let me seek mokṣa,
let me be firm about this.
A wife and children are obstacles
to mokṣa. I will give them up,
I will lead a life
modelled on the life of my father.

7 With strict tapasyā
I will control my senses.
I will give up my wives
and my attendants,
shave my head, wander alone
in the world, begging food
from the bountiful trees
in the forest.

8 All objects of love,
all objects of aversion,
I will give up.
My body will be smeared
with dust, secluded spots
and trees will be my home.

9 Sorrow and joy
will be the same to me,
praise and blame
will be the same to me.
My eyes will look
serenely on all,
I will not seek blessings,
I will not take gifts.

10 I will not mock
anyone,
I will not frown
on anyone,
I will seek the good
of all,
I will smile cheerfully
on all.

11 I will not harm life
moving or unmoving
oviparous or viviparous
worm or vegetable
They will be the same to me
as my own children.

12 I will beg food only
from five or ten houses,
If I am refused food,
I will go without it,
I will eat the littlest possible
rather than ask a man twice.

13 If any homes refuse me,
I will not ask others;
whether I get food or not,
I am content,
Such will be my mahā-tapasyā.

14 Let one man with an axe cut off one arm –
all the same to me as another
smearing sandal-paste on the other arm:
injury same as benefit.

15 Life will not please me,
nor death displease me.
I will not hanker for life,
nor be afraid of death.

16 Cleansed of impure karma,
I will go beyond rituals
performed by men
to remove evils;

17 Deeds of dharma,
actions of artha,
I will not do,
nor actions that lead

18 To the delight of the senses.
I will be free,
like the wind is,
of the enmeshing world.

19 Behaving thus,
doing thus,
walking fearless,
I will one day die.

20 I cannot father children.
I will follow my own dharma,
I will not ensnare myself
in the ways of the world.

21 Respected or condemned by the world
does not matter – the man of passion
who piteously pursues perverse pleasures
follows the way of the dogs."

22 Saying this, Pāṇḍu
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
sadly looked at his wives
Kuntī and Mādrī.

23 "Tell the rājā and his friends,"
he added, "the Kosala princesses,
Vidura, mother Satyavatī,
wise Bhīṣma and the purohitas,

24 The soma-drinking mahātmās
of strict vows, and the elders
in our protection, that Pāṇḍu
has retired to the forest."

25 These were the words of strict-ātmaned Pāṇḍu
when he had made up his mind
to retire to the forest. They listened,
and made this suitable reply:

26 "O bull-brave Bharata!
Many are the āśramas
in which we, your lawful wives,
can practice tapasyā.

27 Many are the ways, other than this,
for the mokṣa of the body,
for the attainment of heaven,
for enjoying the fruits of karma.

28 We can restrain our desires,
give up the pleasures of the senses,
even as our husband does,
and be jointly ascetic with him.

29 O mahā-learned lord!
If you desert us,
we will give up this life –
there is no doubt of this."

30 Pāṇḍu replied, "Indeed,
dharma guides your minds today;
But I will follow the deathless path
of my noble father Vyāsa.

31 I will give up village and town
I will wear dress of bark
I will live on roots and fruits
I will practise tapasyā
I will wander in the mahā-forest.

32 I will bathe in the morning and evening
I will perform the *homa*
I will mortify my body
I will eat little
I will wear rags and skins
I will have my hair matted

33 I will suffer heat and cold and storm
I will suffer hunger and thirst
I will emaciate myself

34 I will eat ripe fruits and unripe roots
I will focus my mind in contemplation
I will pay respects to the pitṛs
I will honour the gods with words and fruits.

35 I will avoid city people and forest creatures
I will not offend the dwellers of the forest
I will not offend dwellers in the villages

36 I will follow the rules of vānaprastha
I will pass on to stricter penances
And following the rules of vānaprastha
One day I will give up this life."

37 Vaiśampāyana went on: Rājā Pāṇḍu
removed the jewel of his crown,
took off his golden necklace,
slipped off his bracelets,

38 Removed his ear-rings
and his costly royal robes
and gave them, and the ornaments
of his queens, to Brahmins, saying:

39 "Go to Hastināpura, tell them
that Pāṇḍu the Kuru monarch,
has chosen the life of the forest
for himself and his wives;

40 Tell them he has given up
artha and kāma,
all comforts and sensual pleasures."
The assembly of Brahmins

41 Heard the lion of the Bhāratas
speak sorrowfully thus,
and a great wail of compassionate grief
rose: *Hai! Hai!*

42 And tears fell from their eyes
as they took leave of the lord of the earth.
Taking all the wealth with them,
they left the forest,

43 And returned to Hastināpura,
where they told Dhṛtarāṣṭra
what had happened to mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu,
and handed over the wealth to him.

44 When he heard of the maha-atmaned rājā Pāṇḍu's
decision in the mahā-forest,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, best among men,
was saddened.

45 His beds, seats, comforts
gave him no pleasure.
He spent his time
brooding on the loss of a brother.

46 Meanwhile, Pāṇḍu, the great Kaurava,
left with his two wives
for the Nāgaśata mountains,
to subsist there on roots and fruits.

47 From there to Caitraratha,
then to Kālakūṭa;
and, crossing the Himavant,
Pāṇḍu arrived in Gandhamādana.

48 Mahābhūtas, Siddhas, and mahā-ṛṣis
protected him; some time
he passed in the plains,
the rest in the mountains.

49 Crossing Indradyumna lake, O mahārāja,
crossing the Haṁsakūta hills,
he went to Śataśṛṅga, the hundred-
peaked range, for his tapasyā.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

1 Janamejaya said:
A valiant practiser of tapasyā
was Pāṇḍu,
and he soon became the delight
of Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

2 Pāṇḍu served his spiritual superiors,
he disciplined his senses
he was not proud, he struggled hard
to achieve heaven by merit.

3 He was brother to some ṛṣis, like a loved-
and-loving sakhā-friend to others;
many ṛṣis protected him
and treated him as a son.

4 A long time passed,
and Pāṇḍu with single-
minded tapasyā achieved
the status of a Brahmarṣi.

5 On amāvāsyā, the new-moon night,
the rigid-vowed ṛṣis
gathered, eager to have
a darśana of Brahmā.

6 Watching them,
mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu asked,
"Most eloquent of men,
where are you going?

7 The ṛṣis replied:
"All the mahātmās, ṛṣis and pitṛs
will meet in the abode of Brahmā
for the Self-Born's darśana."

8 Pāṇḍu stood up, eager
to accompany them.
As he was leaving
northwards from Śataśṛṅga
with his two wives,
the holy men of tapasyā said:

9 "On our northward trek,
as we climb the king of mountains,
as we go higher and higher,
we will come upon lovely
and inaccessible regions
on the breast of the hill.

10 Gods, gandharvas, and apsarās
dwell there; everywhere
sweet, celestial songs
flow from hundreds of palaces.

11 There are the gardens of Kubera
on low slopes and plateaux,
beside the banks of great rivers,
inside mountain caverns.

12 There, the inaccessible snow-topped hills
without birds, beasts, or trees.
There, uninhabitable, inaccessible lands,
drenched in torrential rain.

13 Even birds cannot live there,
how will deer and other animals?
Only air there,
Only Siddhas and sublime ṛṣis.

14 O bull-brave Bhārata,
your queens are used to comfort –
how will they survive there?
Do not accompany us."

15 Pāṇḍu replied:
"Mahā-auspicious maharṣis! They say
for a childless man, there is no heaven.
I am childless, O tapasyā-wealthy ones!
Let my sorrow speak.

16 Great is my grief
because great is the debt
I owe my ancestors.
When my body perishes,
O great ṛṣis,
will not they be doomed too?

17 Four debts accompany humans
when they are born in this world –
to ancestors, gods, ṛṣis, and fellow beings.
Dharma demands these debts be paid.

18 The learned in dharma have clearly said:
No region of bliss exists
for the person who fails
to discharge these debts in time.

19 How are the gods pleased?
By yajñas.
How are munis pleased?
By study and tapasyā.
How are the pitṛs pleased?
By procreating sons and śrāddha-rites.
How are fellow beings pleased?
By kindness.

20 To gods, ṛṣis and fellow beings
I have paid my debts.
But what about the pitṛs, O tapasyā-followers,
who will perish when I perish?

21 O great ṛṣis, I am not free
of the debt I owe my pitṛs.
Even the best of men are expected
to discharge their pitṛ-debts.

22 The maharṣi Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
fathered me in my father's field.
I need to father children
in my wives' fields."

23 The ṛṣis replied:
"With divine foresight,
O dharmātmā rājā, we see
defectless and god-like children
for you;

24 O tiger-among-men, act in such a way
that the purpose of the gods
may be fulfilled. The clear thinker
sees his actions bear sweet fruit.

25 Think clearly, therefore –
and act! The fruits you desire
are in sight. No doubt at all,
you will have meritorious sons."

26 When Pāṇḍu heard them say this,
he recalled the deer's curse,
the loss of his procreative powers,
and he wondered what they meant.

27 In private he said to Kuntī,
his lovely *dharma-patni*,
"In this time of trouble for us,
find a way to have children.

28 Kuntī, this is the eternal way.
Those who know dharma say
children are the stable foundation
of dharma in the three worlds.

29 Yajñas, gifts, tapasyā, even
the strictest of strict-
observed vows do not redeem
a childless man.

30 Śucismitā, sweet-smiling one,
I know this,
I know I will never attain the auspicious worlds
because I am childless.

31 Lovely wife, I was ruthless,
I was vicious, I know;
and I deserved the curse of the deer
that dried up my virility.

32 Pṛthā-Kuntī, dharma-darshan
lists six kinds of sons
who are heirs and kinsmen,
and six other kinds
who are not heirs, but kinsmen.
Let me explain this.

33 First, *svayaṁjāta*, or the son
by one's wife; second *pranīta*,
or the son born to one's wife
by an accomplished man; third, *putrikāsuta*,
the son on one's wife by a paid-for person;
fourth, *paurṇabhava,* to a married woman
by her second husband
fifth, *kānīna*, the son of
an unmarried girl; sixth, *svairīṇya*,
the son of an adulterous wife.

34 The six other kinds are:
first, *datta,* or the son given;
second, *krīta,* the son bought; third, *kṛtrima*,
the son who becomes so out of gratitude;
fourth, *sahoḍa*, the son conceived
before the parents have married;
fifth *jñātireta*, the son born of incest;
sixth, *hīnayonī*, son of a lower-caste womb.

35 If the first method fails,
a wife should try to get a son
in any of the ways I have listed
in order of importance

36 Pṛthā-Kuntī! Self-born Manu
has even laid down that,
in emergency when a man
fails to father a son,
he should seek the services
of a person nobler than himself.
'Even if born from another
person's sperm,
such a child obtains
the fruits of dharma,
according to good people.'
So advises Manu Svayambhava.

37 My sexual powers failing,
I want you, my wife,
to have children by a man
equal to or nobler than me

38 In this connection, Kunti,
let me give you the story
of Śāradaṇḍāyanī,
the wife of a great hero,
who at the command of her lord
conceived sons by another.

39 That warrior-lady, when
her fertile period arrived, bathed,
and went where four roads met;
there she waited.
A great ascetic Brahmin passed by,
and she solicited him with a flower;
she poured libations of ghee
in the *puṁsavana.* sacrificial fire ritual

40 Then she lived with him,
and had three mahā-chariot-hero sons;
the eldest of these
was known as Durjaya.

41 O my wife of good fortune,
I command you, find a Brahmin
of shining tapasyā, superior to me,
and have a son by him."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 Mahārāja Janamejaya (continued Vaiśampāyana), when the bull-brave hero Pāṇḍu spoke to her in this manner, Kuntī replied:

2 "Do not say this. You are wise in dharma.
I am your *dharma-patnī*;
O my lotus-eyed husband,
I am devoted to you.

3 O mahā-muscled Bharata,
it is fitting that my womb
should give you powerful sons,
with the help of dharma.

4 O tiger-among-men,
I will go to heaven with you.
Come to me,
let us have a child.

5 Not even in thought will I
be embraced by another.
Who is there in this world
superior to you, my lord?

6 O dharmātmā, O large-eyed one,
there is a story from the Purāṇas
I once heard, and now recall.
Listen to me.

7 A long time ago lived a king
named Vyuṣitāśva,
a man of high dharma,
one of the greatest of the Pauravas.

8 That dharmātmā once performed a yajña.
To that yajña of a truthful
and mahā-powerful king,
Indra, the gods and divine ṛṣis came –

9 And tipsy was Indra
with the soma he drank,
and overjoyed the rsis
with the dakṣiṇā they received.

10 Vyuṣitāśva shone; his lustre
shone on all creatures,
like the splendid sun shining
after the wintry season.

11 Soon he performed the mahā-yajña aśvamedha;
and he subdued all the kings
of east, west, north and south;
he exacted tribute from them.

12 He was strong like ten elephants.
Vyuṣitāśva was brave.
Vyuṣitāśva performed the great
Horse-Sacrifice.

13 A śloka is sung in his praise
in the Purāṇic story;
learned men sing it,
extolling his glory:

14 *The earth is the kingdom*
of Vyuṣitāśva
Touching the sea is the kingdom
of Vyuṣitāśva
Protector of his subjects
is Vyuṣitāśva
As a father to his sons
is Vyuṣitāśva to his subjects

15 He performed more yajñas,
he liberally helped Brahmins;
with heaps of precious stones
he continued his yajñas.

16 With a large supply of soma
he performed the *agnisṭoma* yajña
His wife was ravishing Bhadrā;
daughter of king Kakṣivān;
she was a lady
of incomparable beauty.

17 They loved each other deeply.
(This is what I have heard.)
They desired each other.
So strong was their passion,

18 So frequent their indulgence,
that he soon fell a victim
to consumption; he wasted away
like the setting sun.
And when he died,
her grief was inconsolable.

19 O my husband, O tiger-among men,
listen to how Bhadrā,
childless, stricken with sorrow,
wept for her husband :

20 'O my dead husband,
supreme knower of dharma!
What good is a woman
when her husband is dead?
Miserable the life
of a wife without a husband!

21 O my dead husband
O bull-brave Kṣatriya!
Is not death better
than life without a husband?
Your road is my road.
O take me with you!

22 What will I do,
now you are gone? –
Be kind to me,
take me with you!

23 I will go with you
wherever you go.
Smooth road or rough,
I will go to you
wherever you have gone,
my unreturning one!

24 I will be faithful, O rājā,
like a shadow;
I will do only
what you would like done.

25 My lotus-eyed husband,
my lord!
Sucked dry is my heart,
sucked dry
with agony,
without you beside me.

26 What wrong did I do,
poor unfortunate me,
that I should suffer so? –
Did I break the love
of two lovers
to be now thus broken myself?

27 My lord! –
The wife who can live
at all without her lord,
she is evil,
this world is her hell,
her constant anguish.

28 I know in a past birth
I must have sundered
two lovers –
and the punishment
falls on me now
in this body,

29 And makes me
suffer the agony
of my husband's death.
O my rājā,
from today I will lie
on kuśa grass,

30 I will give up comforts,
in the hope that one day
I will see you, my lord,
O show yourself to me!
Command your wife,
here suffering and weeping.'

31 She moaned in this manner,
embracing her husband's corpse
again and again. Suddenly
a voice spoke to her:

32 *Rise, Bhadrā!*
Take this boon from me,
And leave this place
Cāruhāsinī,
Lady of sweet smiles,
Bear my children.

33 *Lovely-thighed-lady,*
Purify yourself
With the menstrual bath,
And on the fourteenth
Night following,
Or aṣṭamī, *the eighth*
After the moon,
Sleep with me.

34 Bhadrā devī listened to the voice,
and, eager for children,
obeyed the instructions
exactly as pronounced.

35 And, O great Bharata, Bhadrā
had seven sons
by that corpse – three Śālyas
and four Madras.

36 O bull-brave Bhārata!
With the śakti of your yoga
you too can have sons by your will power
even as she did."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 Pāṇḍu, learned in dharma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
heard this, and said to his wife Kuntī devī
these dharma-laden words:

2 "What you say, Kuntī,
it true. Auspicious lady,
god-like Vyuṣitāśva could afford to do
what you said he did.

3 But let me place before you
such truths of dharma
as the ṛṣis who know dharma
have expounded in the Purāṇas.

4 Lovely lady, sweet-smiling one,
in the past, women
were not restricted to the house,
dependent on family members;
they moved about freely,
they enjoyed themselves freely.

5 They slept with any men they liked
from the age of puberty;
they were unfaithful to their husbands,
and yet this was not adharma,
for the dharma of those times
was promiscuous intercourse.

6 That dharma we now witness
among birds and beasts;
and among them is never
the slightest kāmā or jealousy.

7 Tapering-thighed wife,
the mahā-ṛṣis have praised
this Purāṇa-dharma;
the northern Kauravas still practise it.

8 Sweet-smiling wife, this custom,
so useful to women,
has the sanction of Sanātana Dharma;
the new custom is very recent.
Let me explain to you
who established it, and why.

9 Mention is made of a mahā-ṛṣi
named Uddālaka;
his son was Śvetaketu,
also a mahā-ṛṣi.

10 Lady with lotus-eyes,
the practice of the present times
was established by Śvetaketu,
in a fit of anger. Let me explain.

11 Once, a long time ago
a Brahmin, in the very presence
of Śvetaketu's father, took his mother's hand,
and said, 'Come with me.'

12 Śvetaketu was offended.
His mother taken away,
almost as if by force!
He was angered and outraged.

13 His father saw him furious,
and said, 'Śvetaketu,, my child, *tāta*,
restrain your anger.
This is the Sanātana Dharma –

14 All women of the four castes
are free to have relations
with any man.And the men,
well, they are like bulls.'

15 But Śvetaketu disapproved
of such behaviour,
and it was he who regularised relations
between men and women.

16 And so, from that day on,
it is said, the present system
began prevailing among humans.
(Animals are excluded).

17 Śvetaketu laid down – first,
the unfaithful wife is the immoral wife;
her crime of infidelity is as heinous
as the killing of a baby in the womb.

18 Second, the man who is unfaithful
to a pure, loving wife who,
from her maidenhood, has been chaste,
is guilty also of infanticide.

19 Third, the faithful wife who,
commanded by her husband
to procreate children, refuses,
is guilty also of infanticide.

20 Śvetaketu, son of Uddālaka,
rebelled against tradition,
and established the dharma
now commonly followed.

21 Tapering-thighed lady, it is said
that Madayantī,
urged by her husband Saudāsa,
went to the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha for children.

22 And a son was born to her,
named Asmāka. She did
what she did because she wished
the welfare of her husband.

23 My shy wife, lotus-eyed one,
we ourselves are the children
of Kṛṣna-Dvaipāyana Vyasa, procreated
for the good of the Kaurava dynasty.

24 With these precedents before you,
you should do as I say.
The advice I give you
is compatible with dharma.

25 Sweet queen, devoted wife,
those who know dharma say
when a wife's fertile period arrives,
she must go to her husband

26 And have intercourse with him;
at other times she is free.
According to the wise,
this is the time-honoured dharma.

27 And again, men learned in dharma
have said: A wife must obey
her husband's command, whether his order
follows dharma or adharma.

28 Lovely-faced wife, my procreative powers
are gone, but I long for a son.
Is this not even more reason
for you to obey me?

29 Sweet lady,
I fold my palms
joining the tips
of my lotus-leaf fingers
and I implore you in añjali –
listen to me!
Be gracious to me!

30 Lovely-haired lady,
choose a Brahmin of great tapasyā
have children by him.
Lovely-hipped lady,
only if you do this will I find
the heaven of son-gifted fathers."

31 Pāṇḍu, destroyer of hostile cities,
said this to beautiful Kuntī,
who always wished his welfare;
and she replied:

32 "O excellent Bharata! Great adharma
it is for a wife to be
repeatedly asked a favour; shouldn't a wife
anticipate her husband's wishes?
O maha-muscled lord, listen to me,
my words will please you.

33 I was a young girl then,
in my father's house, attending
on guests and rigid-vowed
Brahmins.

34 I succeeded in pleasing
Bhagavān Durvāsas,
a severely-disciplined-ascetic ṛṣi
learned in the intricacies of dharma.

35 So pleased was he that he
gave me a mantra.
This was the boon he thought
I deserved. He said:

36 *With this mantra you can summon*
any god you like;
he will come to you, and obey you,
whether he likes it or not.

37 *And you can have sons,*
O princess, by his grace.
Great Bhārata, he said this to me
in my father's house.

38 They are a Brahmin's words,
they cannot be futile.
Now is the time.
Ordered by you, I can summon a god

39 And use the mantra to have sons.
O rāja-ṛṣi, truth-speaking lord,
tell me which god to invoke.
I will do as you say."

40 Pāṇḍu said:
"I am blessed!
I am grateful!
You are the saviour of our dynasty!
I namaskāra the mahā-ṛṣi who gave
you this boon!
No kingdoom prospers by adharma

41 Lovely thighed wife, do it –
do it now itself!
O lovely one, summon Dharma,
the purest of all in the three worlds.

42 If Dharma comes to you,
how can adharma touch you?
The world too will think
what you did was an act of dharma.

43 And the son born of Dharma
will be a man of dharma.
If he is Dharma's son,
how can adharma touch him?

44 Śucismitā, sweet-smiling lady,
keeping dharma before you,
be gentle, be polite, be whatever –
and summon Dharma."

45 Lovely-thighed lady Kuntī half-circled
her husband in pradakṣiṇa and saying,
So be it, she resolved to do
her husband's bidding.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: At the time that Kūntī summoned undecaying Dharma, Gāndhārī was already a year advanced in pregnancy.

2 Devī Kuntī propitiated Dharma
hurriedly,
and chanted the mantra given to her
by the ṛṣi Durvāsas.

3 The strength of the mantra brought
Dharma immediately, resplendent
in his chariot, like the sun itself.
He stood before mantra-chanting Kuntī.

4 He laughed.
"Kuntī, what can I give you?"
She laughed.
"A son."

5 He had intercourse with her
in his yoga-mūrti,
and lovely-thighed Kuntī conceived
a world-well-wishing son,

6 Born at the eighth *muhūrta*
called *abhijit,* at noon,
on the auspicious day
of the eighth month, the fifth

7 Day of the bright fortnight,
when the planet *jyeṣṭha*
joined the ascending moon.
A voice from the skies proclaimed:

8 *He will be the paragon of men,*
incomparable in dharma.
He will be truthful and puissant,
and the rājā of the world.

9 *The eldest son of Pāṇḍu*
will be named Yudhiṣṭhira.
This rājā's glory will be great,
it will straddle the three worlds.

10 *Splendour will be his,*
and all manner of lustre.
After dharma-rich Yudhiṣṭhira's birth,
Pāṇḍu said to Kuntī:

11 "According to the wise, Kṣatriyas
are the strongest among men,
so ask for a powerful son.
As the aśvamedha among yajñas,

12 The sun among radiances,
the Brahmin among men,
is the wind-god in energy.
Summon the wind-god.

13 The son he will give us
will be the world's strongest."
Because her husband ordered her,
Kuntī summoned Vāyu,

14 The wind-god. Mahā-powerful Vāyu
came to her, riding a deer.
"Kuntī, what can I give you today?
What is in your heart?"

15 Smiling shyly, she laughed.
"Give me a son,
a strong son, a mahā-bodied son
who will humble everyone's pride."

16 Bhīma was born of Vāyu;
he was massively mahā-muscled.
At the time of his birth,
a voice from the skies spoke:

17 *However strong the strongest,*
there is none stronger than him.
O great Bharata, a marvellous incident marked
the birth of Vṛkodan the Wolf-Waisted One.

18 He fell from his mother's lap
on a stone-slab, which splintered
into countless fragments.
It so happened that,

19 On the tenth day after his birth,
Kuntī, mother of brave heroes,
took her baby with her
and went to bathe in a lake;

20 Returning, she emerged from the hut
to worship the gods,
and was passing by the stone-slab
when a tiger suddenly appeared;

21 Pāṇḍu, incomparable Kuru,
strung his bow and fitted the arrow;
the tiger fled; his reverbrating roars
frightened Kuntī, who rose,

22 Forgetful of the baby
sleeping in her lap;
the baby fell, the stone shattered.
Pāṇḍu was awestruck.

23 The moon was in Maghā,
Bṛhaspatī in the *lagna* of the Lion,
the sun midway in the sky,
and in that auspicious triangular

24 Association, Bhīma was born,
Kuntī's invulnerable son.
The day that Bhīma was born
was Duryodhana's birthday too.

25 And Pāṇḍu again thought:
How can I get a son
second to none, who will win renown
in the three worlds?

26 *Everything depends on fate*
and also on human effort;
destiny itself is helpless,
.without human exertion.

27 *Indra is the greatest god,*
the rātā of gods;
he has strength and vigour,
prowess and glory.

28 *I will please him with tapasyā,*
and get a maha-powerful son.
That son, I know,
will be the greatest of heroes.

29 *He will conquer earth-creatures*
and creatures of other worlds.
Let me practise mahā-tapasyā
in thought, word, and deed.

30 Mahārāja Pāṇḍu consulted mahā-ṛṣis
and advised Kuntī
to observe an auspicious vow
for one year,

31 And he himself, mahā-muscled, standing
on one leg, practised
the severest tapasyā
and self-mortification.

32 Morning and evening
Pāṇḍu-dharmātmā did this, concentrating
his energies on the chief god.
Time passed. Vāsava-Indra appeared,

33 And said: "I will give you
a son whose fame the three worlds
will know, who will please
Brahmins, cows, and all good men.

34 He will punish the wicked,
and delight his kinsmen.
He will be the unparalleled
slayer of his foes."

35 Dharmātmā Pāṇḍu heard mahā-ātmaned Indra
and had the words of the rājā of the gods
in mind when he went to Kuntī
and said:

36 "Auspicious wife, your vow
has borne fruit.
Indra, king of the gods, will give you
the son you desire.

37 O lovely-thighed lady,
go and bear a son
of incomparable talents,
a foe-chastiser,

38 A mahātmā, most learned,
invincible in battle,
sun-splendid, handsome,
a brilliant Ksatriya.
Sweet-smiling wife,
summon Devendra-Indra"

39 As Pāṇḍu instructed,
she summoned Śakra-Indra.
Devendra-Indra came
and fathered Arjuna.

40 In the month of Phālguna,
when two stars joined –
West Phālguni and North Phālgunī –
Arjuna was born.
This was the reason
he was named Phālguna.

41 At the time of his birth,
a neverberating disembodied voice
filled the entire sky
with these words,

42 Addressed to sweet-smiling Kuntī,
but spoken so clearly
that all in the āśrama
could hear them:

43 "Kuntī, your son
Will equal Kārtavīrya
And Śiva in valour,
Your son will be
Invincible like Śakra-Indra,
He will spread
Your glory everywhere.

44 Even as Viṣṇu
Increased Aditi's joy,
Your son Arjuna who is like Viṣṇu
Will increase yours.

45 Subduing Madra,
Somaka, and
The Kuru territory,
Cedi, Kāśi and
Karuṣa, your son
Will bring Lakṣmī,
Goddess of prosperity,
Back to the Kauravas.

46 From the kings
Of the north
He will bring
Gold and gems.

47 He will burn
The Khāṇḍava forest
And feed Agni
On the fat
Of the forest creatures.

48 Your mahā-powerful son
With his brothers
Will rout
All hostile kings,
And perform
Three aśvamedhas.

49 He will resemble
Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma
And Viṣṇu in prowess,
Among brave men
He the bravest, mahā-famous
Above all others.

50 He will please
Mahādeva-Śaṁkara-Śiva in battle,
And receive from him
The Pāśupata-missile,
Happily bestowed.

51 On Śakra-Indra's orders,
Your mahā-muscled son will slaughter
The anti-gods called
Nivātakavacas,
Sworn enemies
Of the gods.

52 Many weapons
Will be his –
Divine weapons;
This bull-brave hero will restore
The vanished glory
Of his ancestors."

53 Kuntī heard these wonderful words
in the birth-room.
The ṛṣis heard them too,
reverberating clearly,

54 While they meditated on
Śataśṛṅga, the hundred-peaked mountain;
the gods in their chariots heard them;
Indra heard them; all rejoiced.

55 *Dundubhi*-kettledrums blared out,
cacophony filled the sky;
a rain of flowers
fell on the region.

56 And all classes of gods offered pūjā-respect
to Pārtha-Arjuna –
The sons of Kadrū,
Vinatā's sons, gandharvas,
the seven great ṛṣis,
Prajāpatis, apsarās,

57 Bharadvāja, Kaśyapa, Gautama,
Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Vasiṣṭha,
and bhagavān Atri, who illuminates
the worlds when the sun sets,

58 Marīci, Aṅgiras, Pulastya,
Pulaha, Kratu,
Prajāpati Dakṣa, more apsarās,
and more gandharvas.

59 All the lovely apsarās, dressed
in elestial robes and
ornaments, chanted praises,
and danced;

60 And the mahā-ṛṣis
chanted *japa* blessings
and Tumburu sang sweetly
accompanied by gandharvas.

61 Bhīmasena, Ugrasena, Urṇāyu and Anagha,
Gopati, Dhṛtārāṣṭra, and Sūryavarcas;

62 Yugapa, Tṛṇapa, Kārṣṇi, Nandi, Citraratha,
The thirteenth Śāliśirā, Parjanya the fourteenth,

63 Fifteenth Kali, Nārada the sixteenth,
Ṛtvā, Brhattvā, Vrhaka mahā-minded Karāla;

64 Many-merited brahmacārī Suvarṇa,
Viśvāvasu, Bhumanyu, Sucandra, and Śaru;

65 The honey-voiced tribes of Hāhā and Hūhū –
all these gods and gandharvas were present.

66 And all the mahā-auspicious
large-eyed apsarās came,
wearing divine ornaments,
to sing and dance.

67 Anūcānā, Anavadyā, Guṇamukhyā, Guṇāvarā,
Adrikā, Somā, Miśrakeśī, Alambuṣā;

68 Marīci, Sucikā, Vidyutparṇā, Tilottamā, Ambikā,
Lakṣanā, Kṣemā, Devī, Rambhā, Manoramā;

69 Asitā, Subāhu, Supriyā, Vapu,
Puṇḍarikā, Sugandhā, Surasā, Pramāthinī;

70 Kāmyā, Śāradvatī – these apsarās danced.
Menakā, Sahajanyā, Karṇikā, Puñjikasthalā,

71 Ṛtusthalā, Ghṛtācī, Viśvācī, Pūrvacitti,
Umlocā, Pramlocā – these ten

72 And Urvaśī, all large-eyed apsarās, sang in chorus.
Dhatṛ, Aryaman, Mitra, Varuṇa, Aṁśa, Bhaga,

73 Indra, Vivasvat, Pūṣan, Tvaṣṭṛ, Savitā,
Parjanya and Viṣṇu – these twelve Ādityas
came and glorified the greatness of Arjuna.

74 O foe-smiting Janamejaya!
Mṛgavādha, Sarpa, mahā-famed Nirṛti,
Ajaikapāda, Ahirbudhnya, Pinākī;

75 Dahana, Īśvara, Kapālin,
Sthānu and bhagavān Bhaga,
were the eleven Rudras.

76 The twin Aśvins, eight Vasus,
mahā-powerful Maruts,
the Viśvadevas, and Sādhyas were also present

77 Karkoṭaka, Vāsuki,
Kaśyapa, Kuṇḍa, the mahā-serpent Takṣaka –

78 These mahā-powerful and mahā-wrathful nāgas,
of great tapasyā also were present.

79 Tārkṣya, Ariṣtinemi, Garuḍa, Asitadhvaja,
Aruṇa and Aruṇi – Vinatā's race – were there.

80 Only tapasyā-perfected mahā-ṛṣis saw them,
the gods in their chariots
and the others on mountain peaks.
Others could not see them.

81 The excellent muṇis were spellbound.
So inspiring was the vision
that their respect for the Pāṇḍavas
increased enormously.

82 Mahā-illustrious Pāṇḍu,
eager for more sons,
spoke again to his *dharma-patni* Kuntī,
but she said,

83 "The wise do not sanction
a fourth conception, even in crisis.
The woman who has intercourse
for a fourth is a loose woman;
the woman who has intercourse
for a fourth is a prostitute.

84 You are learned, you know all
about dharma; why are you
greedy for sons, why do you press me
to this, as if you don't know?"

85 Pāṇḍu said:
"This indeed is what
the dharma-śāstras say.
What you say is right."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

1 After the births of Kuntī's sons
and Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons,
the daughter of the rājā of Madra
said privately to Pāṇḍu:

2 "O great foe-subduer! I think
you find me wanting
I am not happy. My birth is superior
to Kuntī's, and yet
I am inferior to her.
But I do not complain.

3 O great Kaurava, my lord,
I do not complain
though I know Gāndhārī
has a hundred sons.

4 Yet I do complain
that you should have sons
only by Kuntī;
I am as much your wife as she.

5 If Kuntī out of kindness
helps me out,
It will benefit,
and you will benefit.

6 She is my co-wife,
I hesitate to ask her a favour.
If you are pleased with me,
please ask her to help me."

7 Pāṇḍu replied:
"Mādrī, I have often thought
of this; yet I refrained
from telling you; I was not sure
if it would please or displease you.

8 Now that you have asked me,
I will do my best.
I know that if I ask Kuntī,
she will not refuse me."

9 So Pāṇḍu spoke to Kuntī
in private (Vaiśampāyana said):
"Gracious Kuntī, give me more sons
for the welfare of my race

10 And the welfare of the world.
Act in a way that I,
my ancestors, and you too,
may never lack the *piṇḍa*.

11 However difficult, do it – if you wish,
for the sake of fame. Even Indra,
who controls the three worlds,
performs yajñas for the sake of fame.

12 Lovely lady, even Brahmins who know
all the mantras, practise
the severest tapasyā,
seeking gurus for the sake of fame.

13 For the sake of fame, Brahmins
of great tapasyā, and rājarṣis
are ready to perform
the most difficult of deeds.

14 O stainless one! Save Mādrī,
ferry her on the raft
of children. Great fame is yours
if she becomes a mother."

15 Acting on Pāṇḍu's request,
Kuntī advised Mādrī,
"Think of a god,
and you will surely conceive."

16 Mādrī thought for a while
and chose the twin Aśvins.
They arrived instantly,
and fathered twins on her –

17 Nakula and Sahadeva,
unequalled in handsomeness.
At the time of their birth,
a disembodied sky-voice preclaimed:

18 *The beauty*
The talents
The intelligence
Of these two
Will exceed
Those of the
Asvins themselves.
They will dazzle
In their own
Refulgence
Of beauty.

19 The ṛṣis on Śataśṛṅga blessed them,
and with bhakti
conducted the birth-rites
and the name-giving ceremony.

20 Kuntī's eldest son was
Yudhiṣṭhira, the second
Bhīmasena, the third
Arjuna.

21 The first of Mādrī's twins
was Nakula, the second-born
Sahadeva – names given
to them by rejoicing Brahmins.

22 The sons of Pāṇḍu,
best among Kaurava children,
looked like five-year olds
when only a year old.

23 Pāṇḍu saw his sons
shining with divine beauty,
manifesting strength, vigour,
bravery and liberality,

24 And he was pleased enormously.
The munis and ṛṣis
dwelling on Śataśṛṅga
the hundred-peaked mountain,

25 And their wives loved
the three boys.
Pāṇḍu, some time after this,
again went to Kuntī.

26 And spoke to his chaste wife privately.
"She deceived me," said Kuntī.
"With one mantra I gave her,
she managed to get two sons.

27 I am afraid she will get
more sons than I. Scheming woman!
What a fool I was!
How was I to know
she would summon the Aśvins,
and obtain twins?

28 Don't come to me again, my lord,
saying *Grant her a favour.*"
This was how Pāṇḍu
had five god-begotten sons.

29 They restored the Kaurava glory,
great was their own fame.
All were handsome like Soma;
all had the auspicious marks.

30 They were lion-necked
They were proud like lions
They hunted lions
They were great bowmen
They grew up like gods.

31 The ṛṣis of Himavant
saw them grow and flourish,
and rejoiced
in awe-struck wonder.

32 The holy dwellers of Śataśṛṅga
looked after the boys
like their own children,
showering affection on them.

33 And the heroes of the Vṛṣṇi race,
Vasudeva and others,
began thinking : *King Pāṇḍu,*
afraid of the curse, has sought shelter
in the Śataśṛṅga mountain
where he has become a full recluse.

34 *The rājā lives on roots and fruits,*
controls his senses
and spends all his waking hours
in dhyāna yoga.

35 *This is what men who know*
tell us. And the heroes
of the Yādava race, in this way
thought highly of Pāṇḍu,

36 Always wondering: *When will we get*
a chance to meet him?
One day, while they were sitting
and discussing Pāṇḍu, news

37 Arrived of the birth of
Pāṇḍu's sons. In the midst
of great excitement,
the Vṛṣṇis rose and said:

38 "Illustrious Vasudeva! We do not want
Pāṇḍu's sons be without the saṁskāras;
it is our wish that you
send a purohita to him."

39 "Very well," said Vasudeva,
and arranged for a purohita;
and with the purohita he sent
various gifts, including dresses

40 And ornaments. For Kuntī and Mādrī,
he sent maid-servants, servants,
cows, garments, all kinds of wealth,
silver and gold.

41 The purohita left for the forest
taking all these with him.
When Pāṇḍu heard Kāsyapa,
foremost among the twice-born,

42 Was coming, he came forward
to receive him and honour him
according to custom. Prthā-Kuntī and Mādrī,
delighted, praised Vasudeva.

43 Pāṇḍu took his sons
from their mothers' laps, and performed
all the *kriyā*-sacraments,
under Kāśyapa's supervision –

44 The *garbhādhāna* and *canlopanayana*
rituals; and the Brahmin Kāśyapa
recited from the Vedas.
Listen, O Bharata, to this story:
Once upon a time, king Śaryati
had a son named Śuka.

45 Śuka was a great foe-subduer.
With his tremendous bowmanship
he conquered the whole world
up to the limits of the ocean.

46 He performed a hundred yajñas,
each a massive aśvamedha,
and propitiated the gods
and pitṛs; then he retired

47 To the Śataşṛṅga hills,
where he passed his days
on roots and fruits, absorbed
in tapasyā.

48 He was the rāja-ṛṣi
who nourished the fame
of the Pāṇḍava brothers,
teaching them the science of archery.

49 Bhima was expert in mace-fight,
Yudhiṣṭhira in spear-throw;
greatest among men of fortitude
and physical strength,

50 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva
were expert in shield and sword.
When Śuka discovered that
Arjuna equalled him in bowcraft,

51 He was overjoyed,
and gave Arjuna
his glittering and deadly bow
along with special arrows,

52 Fitted with birds' feathers.
And Arjuna's delight
was boundless on receiving
these varied gifts.

53 He knew no one in the world
could match his skill now.
The Pāṇḍavas were separated
from each other by a year's difference.
The incredible glory of Kuntī's and Mādrī's sons
waxed daily.

54 In fact, the glory
of the Pāṇḍavas and the glory
of the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra
waxed equally strong,
both expanding like lotuses
in a large lake.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 When Pāṇḍu saw his five sons
before him on the slopes
of that enchanting mahā-forest, he felt
the strength of his arms restored.

2 It so happened, one day,
when Arjuna was fourteen,
Brahmins assembled to conduct
the auspicious proceedings under
the ascendancy of the planet
Uttara-phālgunī.

3 Kunti was so absorbed
in the ceremonies that she neglected
to give Pāṇḍu proper attention.
She fed the Brahmins,

4 And attended to the purohita.
Passion-obssesed Pāṇḍu summoned Mādrī
and roamed with her in the blossoming forest
(it was spring),

5 And everywhere were *palāśa,*
champaks, mango-blossom,
pāribhadrakas, tilakas,
and all manner of fruit and flowers,

6 And the lakes were lotus-filled,
all of them. Pāṇḍu saw this,
and in his heart stirred
erotic desires.

7 He wandered like a god,
freely, followed by his wife
Mādrī, in a seductive,
captivating dress.

8 Young Mādrī was so ravishing
in that filmy dress, that kāma for her
flamed up inside him
like a forest-fire.

9 The rājā caught hold of her.
Every time he looked
at lotus-eyed Mādrī,
kama gripped him in the forest

10 The rājā caught hold of her
Devī Mādrī trembled, she fought
against him fiercely.
She struggled.

11 But lust maddened him.
He completely forgot the curse.
He had sex with her
by *maithuna*-dharma

12 O great Kaurava Janamejaya!
He forgot the curse,
passion overpowered him,
if seemed that he wanted

13 To commit suicide, as it were.
First he lost his senses,
then, clouded by lust,
he sought the loss of his life.

14 Kāla-dharma ordained it.
Dharmātmā Pāṇḍu,
paragon of the Kauravas,
perished in the act of intercourse.

15 And Mādrī, embracing.
the corpse of her husband.
wept and moaned
in loud grief.

16 Kuntī and her sons arrived,
as did Mādrī's sons,
where rājā Pāṇḍu lay
stretched in death.

17 And Mādrī cried out to Kuntī:
"Come here, alone!
Let the children stay
where they are!"

18 Kuntī heard, ordered
the children back,
and ran to Mādrī,
shouting, "It's over! Hai!"

19 She saw Pāṇḍu and Mādrī
lying on the ground.
Shaking with grief,
she lamented loudly :

20 "Oh, how could he do it?
Why did you let him?
Didn't he know the curse
the ṛṣi had placed on him?
I always was careful with him,
my self-restrained husband!

21 Mādrī, you should have
been careful . . . Why, why,
why did you tempt him
in the loneliness of the forest?

22 He passed his days, I know,
fearing the curse. . . .
What made him lose himself
with you in the forest?

23 Princess of Bāhlīka!
You are fortunate indeed –
you had the chance to see
his face radiant in intercourse."

24 "I tried," said Mādrī, "I tried, O devī.
I begged him again and again,
with tears in my eyes I begged him . . .
Control yourself! I said.
He would not listen; he was bent
on making the curse come true."

25 So great was Kuntī's grief
when she heard Mādrī
that she collapsed on the ground
like an uprooted tree,

26 And lay senseless, unmoving.
Mādrī said, "Get up, get up!"
Lifting Kuntī up,
she showed her

27 Pāṇḍu's softly-smiling face.
Kuntī fell at Pāṇḍu's feet.
And Pāṇḍu smiled,
as if about to speak.

28 Kuntī clasped him, and sobbed.
Her senses were overcome
with affliction; and Mādrī also
clasped the rājā, and sobbed.

29 The Cāraṇas and ṛṣis came,
and expressed their sorrow.
Like the setting sun,
like a dried-up ocean,

30 He lay there, great Pāṇḍu.
The ṛṣis and the Pāṇḍavas
saw him, and both
felt the same grief.

31 And the Brahmins spoke
to both queens, consoling them,
but their grief was great
and inconsolable.

32 "Hai, O rājā, hai," wailed Kuntī,
"you have left us and gone.
Hai, rājā, hai!
Why did you make love to Mādrī.

33 And go away? Why did I live
to see a day like this?
Who will look after Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva,

34 With you gone? May the gods
give you happiness, my husband,
in the same way
you gave happiness to Brahmns here!

35 And the heaven you get, O descendant
of the Ajamīḍhas, for your good karma,
may the same heaven be ours
for our karma!"

36 She bemoaned her fate thus
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and both she and Mādrī
again collapsed on the ground.

37 Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Veda-learned
Pāṇḍavas arrived, and they too,
overcome with grief,
fell on the ground.

38 "Mādrī," said Kuntī, "I am the elder wife;
the chief fruits of dharma are mine.
Do not prevent me
from doing what should be done.

39 I will follow our lord
wherever he has gone.
Stand up! Give me the body.
I have borne him sons,
my earthly life is fulfilled
Now I will be a hero's wife."

40 "Look," replied Mādrī, "I am still clasping
my never-retreating-in-battle lord.
My passion is not quenched.
Elder wife, let *me* go with him.

41 My lord, the best of the Bharatas,
wanted intercourse with me,
and I could not satisfy his kāma.
Let me do so in Yama's realm.

42 Noble lady, could I bring up your children
as if they were mine?
And if I do not,
will not the blame be mine?

43 I know you will bring them up my children
as your own sons.
The rājā died
making love to me.

44 Let my body be burnt with his.
Noble lady, give me permission.
Do not refuse that
which is good for me."

45 The assembled ṛṣis counselled fortitude
to the Pāṇḍava brothers;
and to Kuntī and Mādrī
they said:

46 "Noble ladies, your sons
are not yet come of age –
how can you think
of leaving them now?

47 We will make your foe-smiting sons
rulers of the Kaurava kingdom.
Dhṛtārāṣṭra, eager for power by adharma,
will not deal fairly with your sons.

48 Guardian of Kuntī's honour
is king Kuntibhoja;
guardian of Mādrī's honour
is her brother, the mahā-chariot-hero Śalya.

49 Brilliant bull-brave Brahmins say a faithful widow's
first duty is to her husband,
but in your cases this is
both difficult and undesirable.

50 The true wife, when widowed.
practises brahmacarya
in word, thought, and deed,
performs only good work,

51 Takes up fasting and penance,
eschews spicy and salted foods,
sleeps on the bare ground,
mortifies her body.

52 The widow who pampers herself
is foolish – she loses
her body when the time comes,
and goes to the worst hell.

53 The good widow, by ascetic acts,
controls her desires,
until they are completely snuffed out.
The wife who does this

54 Is favoured by fortune, she even
redeems her dead husband's karma.
She redeems herself,
her sons, and her husband.

55. It is our considered opinion
that both of you should live."
Kuntī replied, "Your words
are to us like Pāṇḍu's words.

56 I accept your advice.
I will do as you say.
Without doubt your words
will save my husband and my sons."

57 And Mādrī said, "Kuntī,
elder wife, excels all,
she excels even Arundhatī, in family concern.
and Kuntibhoja himself is witness

58 To that. Dear elder wife,
devī,
you know I am not as good as you
in bringing up children.

59 Let me go to my husband's world.
And, I repeat;
My passion is still not satisfied.
I beg of you,

60 Give me your permission.
It is my resolve to serve my gracious,
learned, wise-in-truth-and-dharma lord.
Help me to do so."

61 The daughter of the rājā of Madra said this
(Vaiśampāyana continued), praṇāma-ed Kuntī,
and entrusted her twin sons
to Kuntī's care.

62 She embraced her sons,
smelt their heads lovingly,
took Yudhiṣṭhira's hand,
and said:

63 "My sons,
Kuntī is your mother,
I merely the nurse.
Your father is dead,

64 Your elder brother is now father
to you four brothers.
Follow truth and dharma,
The man who cherishes
truth and dharma, never fails
Respect your elders."

65 She namaskare-ed the ṛṣis and Kuntī,
and turning to Kuntī
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
said in a gentle voice:

66 "You are blessed. There is none, O Vṛṣṇi lady,
like you, for you have the valour,
strength, vigour, and brilliance
of five sons around you,

67 Five mighty sons. Desiring heaven, what I said
just now to the ṛṣis is true:
Devī, you are my light,
my guide, most pūjā-worthy

68 Superior in status, purer in virtue.
All virtues shine in you.
I beg of you again, O Yādava lady,
give me leave to follow him.

69 Whatever you think is proper
and consonant with dharma,
fame and heaven – do that,
do nothing else."

70 In a broken voice Kuntī said,
"I give you permission.
Today you will unite with your husband
in heaven – be happy with him.
O fortunate one, large-eyed one, lovely one,
enjoy him forever in heaven."

71 Mādrī said, "His body and my body
will be one flame.
It is my request
that you do this for me.

72 And look after my sons,
their welfare is in your hands.
Is there anything else?
I can think of nothing."

73 With these words (continued
Vaiśampāyana) *dharma-patni* Mādrī
mounted the funeral pyre
of bull-brave Pāṇḍu.

74 And the purohita Kāśyapa
bathed in the ritual manner,
collected the gold pot, ghee,
curds, rice, and sacred water,

75 And instructed the ascetics to light
the aśvamedha-fire on the pyre
from all four directions,
as prescribed in the scriptures.

76 Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers
put on new dresses,
and, on the purohita's guidance,
made the offering of water;

77 And the ascetics and Cāranas
of Śataśṛṅga, the hundred-
peaked mountain, participated
in the cremation of Pāṇḍu.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 After Pāṇḍu's cremation
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the wise, god-like ṛṣis
met for consultation.

2 The ṛṣis said, "Mahātmā, maha-illustrious Pāṇḍu
renounced kingship
and came here to practise tapasyā,
and sought our protection.

3 Rājā Pāṇḍu is now in heaven.
His wife and children
are left in our hands,
as if in trust.

4 It is our specific dharma
to escort them and his widow
to the capital of his kingdom,
along with the relics."

5 The god-like ṛṣis decided
among themselves to do this.
With the sons of Pāṇḍu
leading them,

6 Those success-crowned ṛṣis
of liberal hearts,
went to the capital to see
Bhīsma and Dhṛtārāṣṭra.

7 Taking the sacred remains
of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī's bodies,
they left.
With them went Kuntī.

8 Loving Kuntī, used to comforts,
started on the mission,
determined to make the long journey
seem like a short one.

9 They arrived in Kurajāṅgala
soon enough,
and Kuntī presented herself
at the city's main gate.

10 The ṛṣis said to the gate-keepers,
"Go, inform the rājā."
The news was hurriedly conveyed
to the royal sabhā.

11 And the citizens of Hastināpura
marvelled, seeing thousands
of munis and Cāraṇas
filing into the capital.

12 And just after sunrise,
they flocked into the streets,
their wives and children leading,
to see the holy men.

13 They came out in thousands,
Kṣatriyas and Brahmins,
accompanied by their wives,
in chariots and other vehicles;

14 Vaiśyas and Śūdras swelled
the huge crowds.
There was dharma in each heart.
No envy, no disorder.

15 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Somadatta, Bāhlīka,
far-visioned rājarṣi Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Sañjaya and Vidura,

16 Devī Satyavatī, illustrious
Kausalyā, maid-surrounded
Gāndhārī – all came out
to the main gate.

17 Dhṛtārāṣṭra's hundred sons,
let by Duryodhana,
glittering with varied ornaments,
also came to the gate.

18 When they saw the maharṣis,
they bowed their heads;
then the Kauravas and their purohitas
sat down facing the ṛṣis.

19 The citizens also praṇama-ed,
prostrating themselves,
touched the ground,
and sat down before the ṛṣis.

20 Bhīṣma saw the gathering
perfectly quiet, offered water
to wash the ṛṣis' feet,
performed the customary *arghya*-pūjā,

21 And spoke to the maharṣis
about the kingdom and its welfare.
Dressed in deer-skin,
the matted-haired eldest ṛṣi,

22 With the others' permission, said:
"Pāṇḍu, descendant of Kuru,
renounced the pleasures of kāma
and went to Śataśṛnga.

23 Subsisting on roots and fruits,
that dharmātmā and his two wives
practised strict tapasyā
as laid down in the scriptures.

24 He pleased all tapasyā-performers
of hundred-peaked Śataśṛṅgā
by his careful observance
of the rules of renunciation.

25 He was a brahmacārī.
For some divine purpose,
Dharma fathered him
his first son Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 Mahātmā rājā Pāṇḍu had a second son
by the wind-god Matariśvan.
Here he is, Bhīma,
the mahā powerful one.

27 Kuntī's third son, by Indra,
was Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, whose feats
in the use of bows and arrows
will shame all the world's bowmen.

28 And look at these two tigers-among-men,
finest among men, *puruṣottamau,*
mahā-bowmen too, fathered
by the twin Aśvins on Mādrī.

29 This is Nakula,
this is Sahadeva.
Both are as invincible
as the other Pāṇḍs.

30 In this way the near-extinct life
of his dynasty
was revived for Pāṇḍu,
during his forest exile.

31 The story of the birth,
growth and Vedic education
of the sons of Pāṇḍu
will bring you happiness.

32 Pāṇḍu has gone to the land
of the pitṛs, seventeen days ago,
leaving behind him these children.
He was virtuous and wise,

33 And when he died, and the Vaiśampāyana-fire
was placed in his mouth,
Mādri immolated herself with him.
She sacrificed her life,

34 And has gone to the land of *pati*,
where faithful wives go.
Now is the time to perform
the rituals that need to be performed.

35 These are their bodies' remains.
Here are their illustrious sons,
here their mother. Accept them,
according to Sanātana Dharma.

36 Let the first funeral rites
be peformed for all-dharma-knowing Pāṇḍu,
upholder of Kaurava honour;
let him gain the *pitṛmedha*."

37 He said this, and, in an instant,
ṛṣis and other sages
disappeared suddenly
in the very sight of the Kauravas.

38 The citizens saw them vanish, like
the cloud-cities of the gandharvas,
and they were struck with wonder.
The only words on their lips
as they left for their homes
were *Sādhu! Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!*

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Dhṛtārāṣṭra said:
"Vidura, perform the funeral rites
of Pāṇḍu, who was a lion among men,
and his wife Mādrī, as befits a rājā.

2 For the good of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī,
let cattle, clothing,
gems and other wealth
be generously distributed.
Give to each person
as much as he asks.

3 Let arrangements be made
for Kuntī's obsequy for Mādrī
in the manner that most pleases her.
Cover Mādrī's body carefully,
that neither sun nor wind
may see it.

4 Let none mourn defectless Pāṇḍu.
He was a renowned king;
he leaves behind him five sons,
who resemble the gods."

5 Vidura said, "I will do so."
He and Bhīṣma chose
a sacred spot for the performance
of the funeral ceremony,

6 And immediately the purohitas
went out of the city,
taking with them the sacred,
fragrant, ghee-fed funeral flame.

7 Flowers of the season
Fragrant unguents
Showered the bier
Screened with cloths

8 Expensive cloths
Garlands of flowers
Courtiers, relatives, friends
Respectfully following

9 The remains of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī
United on the bier
Resplendently decorated
Borne on the shoulders of mourners

10 White umbrellas
Waving yak-tails
Musical instruments
Playing – the scene
Was awe-inspiring!

11 Hundreds of men started
distributing gems
at the time of Pāṇḍu's
elaborate funeral ceremony.

12 And large white umbrellas
and larger yak-tails
and lavish dresses were brought
for the funeral ceremony.

13 The priests in white moved
at the end of the procession,
pouring libations of ghee
in the sacred flame.

14 Thousands of Brahmins,
Vaiśyas, Kṣatriyas and Śūdras
followed the bier,
loudly lamenting.

15 "Where have you gone, O lord-among-men,"
they moaned,
"leaving us behind, forlorn
and sorrowing for ever?"

16 Bhīṣma, Vidura,
and the sons of Pāṇḍu wept.
They came to a lovely spot
near the banks of the Gaṅgā.

17 They laid the bier on the ground.
In that bier were united
Pāṇḍu the truthful and lion-hearted,
and his wife Mādrī.

18 They smeared the remains of both
with unguents,
and they brought water in golden vessels
to wash Pāṇḍu

19 Then they mixed fragrant ointments,
and white sandal-paste;
they dressed the remains in white cloth
woven with fibres

20 From all parts of the land,
after first smearing it
with black *agara* mixed with
tuṅgarasa perfume.

21 And the remains of the body,
with the new dress on,
lying on the luxurious bier,
looked as if brought back to life.

22 Chanting mantras from the Vedas,
the purohitas and officiating priests
ended the funeral ceremony with the fire
of Hayamedha, the Horse-Sacrifice

23 When the ceremonies were over,
the Kauravas, directed by purohitas,
applied the fire to the remains
of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī

24 Lying on the bier, all smeared
with ghee, glittering
with ornaments, fragrant with sandal-wood,
lotus, *tuṅgarasa,* and other perfumes.

25 When the flames rose high,
Kausalyā-Ambālikā cried out,
"Hai hai, my son, my son!"
and fell senseless on the ground.

26 They saw her on the ground,
and they wailed in grief,
all the citizens who had
love and bhakti for the rājā.

27 Even the animals wailed,
the birds wailed,
and the citizens wailed
when Kuntī wept.

28 Śāntanu's son Bhīsma,
mahā-minded Vidura,
and all the gathered Kauravas
were beside themselves with grief.

29 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Vidura, rājā Dhṛtārāṣṭra,
the five Pāṇḍavas and the Kaurava ladies
performed the water-ceremony.

30 After the water-offering,
the citizens, though themselves sorrowing,
began to console
the bereaved sons of Pāṇḍu.

31 The preferred to sleep
on the bare ground;
seeing this, the citizens also
chose to give up their beds.

32 Twelve days of mourning
passed like this,
with all citizens young and old,
condoling with Pāṇḍu's sons.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Bhīṣma, Dhṛtārāṣṭra and Kuntī
and their friends performed
rājā Pāṇḍu's śrāddha with deathless offerings.

2 The Kauravas and thousands of Brahmins
were feasted; they were offered jewels
as gifts, and large tracts of land,
and entire villages.

3 Cleansed of the impurity
of a father's death,
they returned to Hastināpura,
accompanied by Pāṇḍu's sons.

4 The citizens of Hastināpura
mourned the death of Pāṇḍu,
bull-brave Bharata king,
as if their own relative had died.

5 After the śrāddha, Vyāsa,
seeing everyone grieving,
said to his deeply-bereaved
and woe-depressed mother:

6 "They are all over,
our days of happiness;
days of sorrow are come upon us
Evil thrives daily;
the green years of the earth
are gone.

7 Calamitious Kāla
will now take over
with manifold māyās;
Dharma will languish,
ill deeds flourish.
from this day on.

8 The Kauravas will do evil;
and the world
will be destroyed.
Before that happens, mother,
seek out the forest,
and practise yoga.

9 Do not be witness
to the suicide
of your own race."
Saying "I will do so,"
she went inside and spoke
to her daughter-in-law:

10 "Ambikā, because of the misdeeds
of your grandson, they say
the dynasty of the Bharatas
and the Bharata race will perish.

11 I come here to tell you
that I will go to the forest
before that happens, taking with me
my bereaved daughter-in-law Ambālikā."

12 Accompanied by both daughters-in-law,
Ambikā and Ambālikā,
and taking Bhīṣma's permission,
strict-vowed Satyavatī went to forest.

13 O mahārāja Janamejaya! Engaged
in awesome tapasyā in the forest,
the devīs gave up their bodies
and reached the ultimate goal.

14 Pāṇḍu's sons (said Vaiśampāyana)
performed the various *saṁskāras*
mentioned in the Vedas, and grew up
in the house of their father.

15 And they played games happily
with Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons,
excelling them always
in skill and strength.

16 In running, in hitting target,
in eating bouts, in dust-flinging,
Bhīmasena
outshone them all.

17 O rājā Janamejaya! He would pull them
by their hair till they struck blindly
at each other – and then
he would laugh!

18 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhima
could take on the one hundred and one
mahā-powerful sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra
as if they were one –

19 And pull their hair,
Throw them down,
Drag them on the ground.
And box the heads of some,
And the knees and shoulders of others.

20 Sometimes, playing water-games,
he would seize ten of them,
and duck their heads in the water
till they gasped for breath.

21 And when they climbed a tree
to steal fruits, Bhīma
would pummel his feet at the trunk,
making it shake wildly,

22 Till, numb with concussion,
they fell in a heap
on the ground – all of them,
princes as well as fruits.

23 In wrestling, in racing,
in any form of physical skill,
the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra
were no match for Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

24 He did this all in fun.
Nothing pleased him more
than teasing and humiliating
the sons of Dhṛtārāṣṭra.

25 But illustrious Duryodhana,
Dhṛtārāṣṭra's eldest son,
disliked Bhima's great prowess,
and nourished a grudge against him.

26 In fact, Duryodhana's nature
was opposed to dharma.
he was deluded and ambitious,
he was prone to evil.

27 He thought : *Wolf-waisted Bhīma,*
son of Kuntī, second Pāṇḍava,
surpasses us in strength.
I must somehow destroy him.

28 *The man's so powerful,*
single-handed he dares
to challenge a hundred of us.
I must break his strength,

29 *Perhaps when he's sleeping*
in the palace gardens,
I'll throw him in the Gaṅgā.
Then, imprisoning Yudhiṣṭhira

30 *The eldest, and Arjuna the youngest,*
I'll rule the earth.
Duryodhana planned this wickedness
and waited for an opportunity.

31 One day, O Janamejaya,
for playing water-games
he ordered the construction
of a lavish pleasure-house

32 With many rooms fitted
with luxurious conveniences,
with glowing wide curtains,
and flags waving on the roof.

33 It was built near Pramāṇakoṭi,
and he called the palace
Udanakrīḍana,
"The Mansion of Water-Sports".

34 The finest cooks were brought
to concoct delicious preparations
for chewing, drinking, sipping,
licking and sucking.

35 When all was ready, the officers
sent word to Duryodhana,
who, bent on mischief,
invited the Pāṇḍavas:

36 "Let us all go today
to the banks of the Gaṅgā,
and spend the time enjoying the groves
and playing water-games."

37 Yudhisthira said, "Let's do so."
The Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
climbed into their chariots
(which resembled glittering cities)

38 And mounted tall elephants,
and went to the Gaṅgā.
When they reached the grove,
they dismissed their retinue.

39 They looked around them –
at the sylvan delights.
And the five brothers strode in
like lions entering mountain caves.

40 They entered the palace
of graceful windows,
of entrancing artificial
water-fountains.

41 Beautifully-plastered walls,
beautifully-painted murals,
pools of transparent water
with clusters of lotuses.

42 Flower-studded banks,
filling with fragrance
the entire scene; season flowers
decorating the paths.

43 The Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
sat down, refreshed;
they began enjoying the many delights
placed before them.

44 And they began pushing morsels
of delicious food
in each other's mouths,
playfully passing the time.

45 But ill-minded Duryodhana
had mixed poison
in Bhīmasena's portion,
the poison called *kālakūṭa*.

46 His speech was like nectar,
his heart like a razor.
He rose like a brother,
like a bosom friend,

47 And with his own hands fed
the poisoned food to Bhīma.
Bhīma swallowed
the food gladly,

48 And Duryodhana laughed
to himself.
That ill-minded man thought
he had achieved his mission.

49 And so the Pāṇḍavas
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
began sporting in the waters,
playfully passing the time.

50 Games over, they put on
fresh dresses and glittering ornaments.
Evening came.
Tired, the Pāṇḍavas

51 Decided to spend the night there,
in the pleasure-house.
The water-games had made them
very tired, specially Bhīma,

52 The most strenuous player
of them all.
He chose a large room in the Pramāṇakoṭi
and rested there.

53 Pāṇḍava-Bhīma was fatigued:
exercise and poison had wearied him.
The cool air spread the poison
inside him; he lost consciousness.

54 Duryodhana with his own hands
trussed him up with creepers,
and rolled the corpse-like body
into the waters of the Gaṅgā.

55 Bhīma, unconscious, sank
into the waters slowly
till his heavy body
fell on a group of young nāgas.

56 Immediately, many nāgas
pounced on him, biting
him all over with mahā-fangs
loaded with snake-venom.

57 The vegetable-poison in his blood,
the poison of the *kālakūṭa*,
mixing with the snake-venom,
got neutralised.

58 There were snake-bites all over
his body except his chest –
so tough was his skin there,
their fangs could not pierce it.

59 Kuntī's son Bhīma recovered consciousness,
tore apart his creeper-ropes,
and pressed his body heavily
down on the nāgas. Some escaped.

60 Those who fled reported
the matter to Vāsuki,
the rājā of the snake-world,
equal to Vāsava-Indra himself.

61 "Great snake-lord! A human
fell on us in the waters.
He was tied with creeper-ropes,
he was senseless; perhaps poisoned.

62 We started biting him,
but he soon recovered,
snapped his ropes, and,
without warning,

63 Began to crush us under him.
Who is this mahā-muscled hero?"
So Vāsuki, great snake-lord,
hurried to the spot,

64 And saw powerful Bhīma,
of awesome valour.
Among the snakes was Āryaka,
grandfather of Kuntī's father Śūrasena.

65 He saw his grandson's grandson
and, overjoyed,
embraced him. Mahā-illustrious Vāsuki
was pleased, and said:

66 "We must do all we can
to please him. Load him
with all the gems and jewels
and other wealth you have."

67 But Āryaka replied,
"O great snake-lord,
your pleasure is enough!
He needs no gems or money.

68 If it pleases you,
allow this mahā-powerful prince
to drink the rasa of the thousand-
elephant-strong potion.

69 Let this young man drink
as much of the potion as he can."
Vāsuki said to Āryaka,
"It will be done as you wish."

70 Bhīma purified himself.
The nāgas blessed him.
He sat down, facing the east,
and began to drink.

71 In one breath he drank off
a full vessel of the poison;
one after the other,
he finished eight vessels.

72 After which, foe-smiting mahā-armed Bhīmsena,
mightily pleased,
lay down on a celestial bed
brought there by the nāgas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 The Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
finished their various sports
and returned to Hastināpura

2 Without Bhima, thinking
Bhima must have gone ahead of us.
They returned on horses,
elephants, chariots, and other vehicles.

3 Wicked Duryodhana
joyfully noted Vrokadana-Bhīma's absence,
and along with his brothers
returned to the capital.

4 Yudhiṣṭhira was such a dharmātmā,
so innocent of wicked ways,
that he considered every person
to be as virtuous as himself.

5 He went to his mother Kuntī
and, out of affection for Bhīma,
after paying his respects to her,
asked, "Mother, has Bhīma returned?

6 I haven't seen him here, mother.
Where could he have gone?
We searched for him everywhere,
in the groves and woods,

7 And failed to find him.
Then we thought, good mother,
perhaps Vṛkodana-Bhīma
has gone ahead of us.

8 And so, anxious, we come here
to you. Is he here?
Mahā-favoured mother, where has he gone?
Have you sent him anywhere?

9 Illustrious mother,
tell me, remove my doubts.
My heart is full of fear
for brave Bhīma.

10 I saw him last sleeping.
Can it be someone has killed him?"
When she heard Yudhiṣṭhira
speak in this way, Kuntī

11 Cried out, *Hai! Hai*!
Perturbed she said to him,
"Son, I have not seen Bhīma,
he did not come to me.

12 Go, hurry, and with your brothers
find out where he is."
She said this sorrowfully
to her eldest son,

13 And immediately sent for Kṣattā-Vidura,
to whom she said, "Kṣattṛ, bhagavan,
Bhīma cannot be found anywhere!
Where can he have gone?

14 All the others have returned
from the pleasure-house;
only my mahā-muscled son Bhīma
is missing.

15 I know Duryodhana
cannot bear the sight of him.
Duryodhana is crooked, cruel,
shameless, and covets the crown.

16 Perhaps in a fit of anger Suyodhana-Duryodhana
slew my valiant Bhīma.
Oh, I am so afraid!
My heart seems to be burning . . ."

17 Vidura replied:
"Don't say so, fortunate lady!
Instead, protect your other sons.
If you accuse wicked-ātmaned Duryodhana,
he may decide to harm them.

18 Did not mahā-muni Vyāsa say
your sons would be long-lived?
Well . . . Bhīma will return
and relieve your anxiety."

19 Learned Vidura said this,
and returned to his house.
Kuntī and her sons passed the time
in great anxiety.

20 In the meantime, on the eighth day
Pāṇḍava Bhīma woke from slumber,
and felt tremendous energy
surge through him . . .

21 The nāgas gathered round him,
consoling and cheering him,
and gave mighty-armed Bhīma
the following boon:

22 *The poison you have drunk,*
O mahā-muscled one, will give you
the strength of ten thousand elephants –
none will defeat you in battle.

23 *O bull-brave Kaurava,*
bathe in these sacred waters
and return to the palace;
your brothers mourn your absence.

24 Mahā-muscled Bhīma bathed,
and dressed himself in white garments
and wore white flowers.
There the powerful nāgas

25 Offered him paramanna,
felicitous food, fragrant
with sweet-smelling herbs.
Feasted and offered pūjā-respect

26 By the great snakes, Pāṇḍava Bhīma
rose from the undersea,
decorated with various
divine ornaments –

27 He rose from the undersea,
the world of the nāgas,
happy of heart,
lotus-eyed, invincible,

28 And he was transported
by the snakes to the grove
of the pleasure-house, where
he had come. Then they left.

29 Mahā-powerful Bhīma,
Kuntī's son,
ran to his mother
as quickly as he could.

30 He offered his respect to her
and his eldest brother,
and lovingly smelt the heads
of his younger brothers.

31 His mother – all of them –
embraced him
in filial joy, murmuring,
We are blessed! We are blessed!

32 And mahā-powerful Bhīma
narrated the wicked plot
of Duryodhana
to his brother.

33 He explained in detail
all the sad and happy
experiences he had
in the realm of the nāgas.

34 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira cautioned Bhima,
"Remember,
not a word of this to anyone –
on no account whatsoever.

35 And let us all, from today,
learn to look after
each other." Mahā-muscled
dharma-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said this.

36 A loved charioter was
throttled to death.
Dharmātmā Vidura advised them
to overlook even this.

37 Not long after this,
Duryodhana took some *kālakūta*
venom, fresh, virulent,
deadly –
a horripilant poison –
and mixed it in Bhīma's food;

38 But Yuyutsu, son
of the Vaiśya maid
and cousin-brother of the Pāṇḍavas,
wishing them well,
informed them.
Wolf-waisted Bhīma ate it, however,
and succeeded in digesting it.

39 That vicious poison,
capable of killing a man,
had no effect on wolf-waisted Bhīma
when he swallowed it.

40 These were the ways
Duryodhana, Karṇa, and Śakuni
adopted in order to get rid
of the Pāṇḍavas

41 Though the Pāṇḍavas knew,
they kept silent, controlling their anger
They were advised into silence
by Vidura's counsel.

42 When king Dhṛtarāṣṭra saw bitterness growing
between the Kaurava and Pāṇḍavas
he decided
to engage the guru Kṛpa

43 To train them in the arts of war,
and in various war-weapons.
Born in a clump of reeds,
Veda-wise Kṛpa taught them archery.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-THIRTY

1 "Tell me," said Janamejaya,
"about the birth of Kṛpa –
was he indeed born from a clump of reeds?
where did he learn his war-skills?"

2 Vaiśampāyana replied:
The maharṣi Gautama
had a son named Śaradvat-Gautama,
born armed with arrows.

3 From the day of his birth
he had a passion for bowcraft,
and not much interest
in other branches of knowledge.

4 Brahmacārīs practise tapasyā
and attain knowledge;
his tapasyā was concentrated
on studying weapons of war.

5 Such was his bowmanship,
he frightened even Indra,
rājā of the gods, by his tapasyā
in the art.

6 Indra summoned Janapadī,
a goddess' daughter,
and said to her,
"Destroy his tapasyā."

7 She went to Śaradvat's
heart-enchanting āśrama
where he sat, bow and arrows
in hand – and she tempted him.

8 She wore a single dress, that apsarā,
she was incomparably lovely.
The eyes of Saradvat
dilated in delight.

9 He trembled incontrollably;
his bow and arrows
slipped from his hands
and fell on the ground.

10 Because he was a man
of maha knowledge and tapasyā;
he collected himself
and overcame his feelings.

11 But so strong was his passion
that, without knowing,
still trembling,
he ejaculated his semen.

12 Leaving his how and black deerskin,
the muni fled from the apsarā
and the āśrama. His semen
fell on a sharp-pointed reed.

13 The drops spilled on either side
and from them were born
Saradvat's two children,
twins.

14 One of rājā Śantanu's retinue,
a soldier, saw them.
Śantanu had come to the forest
on a hunting expedition.

15 He guessed from the bow,
arrows and black deerskin nearby,
that they might be the sons
of a brahmin skilled in weapons.

16 He picked them up and,
along with the bow and arrows,
took them to the rājā.
The king was stirred to pity.

17 He took them to the palace,
"They will be my children,"
That finest of monarchs
ordered the prescribed saṁskāras

18 To be performed; the twins
grew up happy in the palace.
Meanwhile Śaradvat continued
his study of the weapons of war.

19 Because Kṛpa means compassion,
Śāntanu called the boy Kṛpa
and the girl Kṛpī. They were
the children of his compassion.

20 By his tapasyā Śaradvat secretly learnt
about his children,
and one day he came to the palace
and presented his *gotra*-lineage to Śāntanu

21 He taught Kṛpa the four aspects
of the art of battle,
and other sciences of war,
in all their subtle details;
and Kṛpa soon became
a supreme ācārya of war-craft.

22 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's maha-chariot-hero sons,
the Pāṇḍavas, and the Yādavas
all studied war-craft from Kṛpa,
as did the Vṛṣṇis and many kings.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued;
Bhīsma, eager to educate
his grandsons, began searching
for a ācārya full of prowess
and specially skilled
in the various arts of war.

2 Only the most intelligent,
only the most illustrious,
only the expert in war-craft,
only the equal of the gods,

3 Should be guru to the children –
Such was Bhīṣma's resolve.
So he chose Bharadvāja's son,
wise Droṇa,

4 To be tutor of the princes
Drona was learned in the Vedas.
After Bhīṣma had approached
and honoured him suitably,

5 Droṇa, greatest of experts
in the science of war,
was pleased; and accepted the Kaurava
and Pāṇḍava princes as pupils.

6 He taught them all aspects
of warfare; in a short time,
the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas
became expert in the use of weapons.

7 Janamejaya asked:
"How was Droṇa born?
Where did he learn his skill?
How did he come to the Kauravas?
Whose son was he?

8 How was his son Aśvatthāman born
who excelled all in war-craft?
Tell me all this –
I am eager to know the details."

9 At the source of the Gaṅgā
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
lived bhagavan-ṛṣi,
strict-vowed Bharadvāja.

10 One day – this was long ago –
he and some othr ṛṣis
went to the Gaṅgā's bank
to perform a great yajña.

11 There, bathing in the waters
was the apsara Ghṛtācī,
young, confident,
lovely, sensual.

12 As she changed, her dress
slipped and fell –
he saw her, and sexual desire
inflamed the ṛṣi.

13 Learned Bharadvāja could not contain himself –
his semen gushed out,
and the drops fell
in a *droṇa*, the yajña-pot.

14 Droṇa was born in that *droṇa*
Droṇa was wise,
Droṇa knew all the Vedas
and the Vedāṅgas.

15 Once the ṛṣi Bharadvaja
had given the secret
of his fire-weapon Agneya
to the mahā-favoured ṛṣi Āgniveśa;

16 That ṛṣi Agniveśa
was born from fire
and he passed on the mahā-fire-weapon
to Bharadvāja's son. Droṇa.

17 Bharadvāja had a friend,
Prsata, a king, loved-and-loving ṣakhā.
Pṛṣata had a son
named Drupada.

18 Young Drupaḍa, a bull-brave Kṣatriya,
used to go to the āśrama
of Bharadvajā, to play
and study with Droṇa.

19 O lord-of-men Janamejaya! Wheṇ Pṛṣata died,
mahā-muscled Drupada
was installed rājā
of northern Pāñcāla

20 In course of time,
Bharadvāja also went to heaven.
Drona continued
his tapasyā in the āśrama.

21 Droṇa knew the Vedas
and Vedaṅgas,
Droṇa had burnt his misdeeds
in the fire of tapasyā,
Droṇa was famed
the world over.

22 Devoted to his pitṛ-ancestors,
Droṇa, desiring children,
married Kṛpī,
Śaradvat's daughter, a girl of dharma,
delighting in agnihotra,
a model of self-control.

23 Gautamī-Kṛpī had a son named
Aśvatthaman. At the time
of his birth, he neighed like
the celestial horse Ucchaiḥśravas;

24 And a voice from the sky
said, *Because the voice*
of this child is like a horse's
and because it is so loud,

25 *He shall be Aśvatthāman,*
the Horse-Voiced One.
Bharadvāja's son was overjoyed
with his son Aśvatthāman

26 Droṇa stayed at the āśrama,
devoting his time
to the study of weapons of war.
One day he heard
that the great foe-slayer
Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma,

27 Foremost among arms-wielders,
enormously learned
Paraśurāma himself,
Rama-with-the-Axe,
had expressed a desire to give
away his wealth to Brahmins.

28 Droṇa was acquainted
with Paraśurāma's excellence
in the knowledge of divine weapons
and Nīti-śastra,
and Droṇa decided to obtain
the knowledge for himself.

29 Mahā-muscled Droṇa of mahā-tapasyā,
accompanied by a band
of strict-vowed ṛṣis – his disciples –
set out for Mahendra mountain.

30 Arriving there, Droṇa saw –
Bhṛgu's son Paraśurāma himself! –
the self-disciplined warrior!
the great foe-annihilator!

31 Droṇa and his disciples
approached the great Bhṛgu.
"I am Droṇa," he said,
"of the race of Āṅgirasa."

32 He touched his head on the ground
in obeisance, he prostrated
himself at Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma's feet
He knew that Paraśurāma.

33 Planned to distribute his wealth
and retire to the forest, and he said,
"Bull-brave Brahman I am Bharadvāja's son,
but not born in a womb.

34 My name
is Droṇa, I am here
to obtain your wealth." Paraśurāma,
Kṣatriya-exterminator, replied:

35 "Best of the twice-born, you
are most welcome, Speak on"
Droṇa heard this,
and said to Paraśurāma

36 "Foremost of foe-crushers,
giver-away of wealth,
many-vowed ṛṣi,
I come here for-your wealth."

37 "Whatever gold I had,"
replied Paraśurāma,
"I have already given away
to Brahmins.

38 This lovely lady, the earth, this devī,
sea-braceleted
and town-and-city-garlanded,
I have given to Kaśyapa.

39 Left with me now
is my body, and all
my weapons of war –
that is all.

40 You can have my body
or my weapons.
Tell me quickly, Droṇa,
what you would like."

41 "Your weapons," replied Droṇa,
"all of them, together
with the secrets of how
to use them in battle."

42 "Granted!" said Paraśurāma,
and handed over all his weapons
to Droṇa, together with the secrets
of their use in battle.

43 First of the twice-born Droṇa went
to his sakhā-friend Drupada
elated at receiving
the various weapons, and considering
himself most fortunate.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 Vaiśampāyana continued;
Bharadvaja's son illustrious Droṇa
went to Drupada and said,
"O rājā, I am your sakhā-friend Droṇa."

2 These friendly words of Droṇa
did not seem friendly to the king;
on the contrary the king of Pāñcāla
was hugely incensed.

3 Anger puckered his brows,
anger inflamed his eyes,
pride of position stirred the rājā;
he said to Droṇa:

4 "Friend? –
you presume a great deal, Brahmin,
to make me suddenly your friend.
Your think much of yourself, twice-born me.

5 Foolish man!
Do you think great kings
can be friends with ill-starred
and moneyless people like you?

6 If we were equally favoured,
we could have been friends.
Kāla, which corrodes everything,
corrodes friendship too.

7 How long can friendship stay
without getting rusted?
Merciless Kāla brings with it
all kinds of bitterness.

8 Forget this so-called friendship
that never existed.
I was friends with you, O best of Brahmins
with a selfish motive.

9 There is no friendship
between rich man and poor man,
between educated and unlettered,
between the hero and the coward.

10 You friends with me! –
Only equally brave
or equally skilled
inter-marry are friends;
The poor and the rich
neither inter-marry or are friends.

11 Nor is there friendship between
who knows sruti and who doesn't.
King looks down on non-king,
chariot-hero on non-chariot-hero.
And you have the presumption
to address me as friend!"

12 Bharadvāja's illustrious son Droṇa
heard Drupada speak this
and, swallowing his anger,
he reflected

13 On how he should deal
with the king of Pāñcāla.
He hurried to Hastināpura,
capital of the Kauravas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 In Hastināpura, Droṇa,
excellent son of Bharadvāja,
lived secretly in the house
of Gotama's son Kṛpa

2 (In the intervals of his discipleship
under Kṛpa, Aśvatthāman instructed
the Pāṇḍavas in the use of arms.
None guessed Aśvatthāman's identity.)

3 Droṇa lived in secret.
One day the Kuru princes
in a group left Hastināpura's limits
to play stick-ball.

4 They had a ball with them,
and, as they were playing,
it so happened that the ball
fell in a well.

5 They looked at each other
in guilty helplessness,
and began wondering how
to retrieve the ball.

6 They saw near them a dark,
emaciated Brahmin
just come after his evening prayers
and performance of agnihotṛ.

7 They had given up all hope,
but when they saw
that mahātmā Brahmin,
they quickly surrounded him.

8 Droṇa smiled to himself,
seeing their helplessness.
Conscious of his powers,
he said:

9 "Aho! You call yourselves Kṣatriyas!
Shame on you!
A gallery of Bhārata heroes
defeated by a ball?

10 Look, with these grass-blades
I will bring up not only
the ball but also this ring
which I fling in the well –
and all I want in exchange
is a good dinner."

11 Droṇa took off his ring
and threw it in the waterless well.
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Droṇa;

12 "With Kṛpa's permission,
take from us some thing,
O Brahmin, that will last you
a lifetime."

13 Droṇa smiled, "My mantras
will transform this fistful
of long grasses into weapons. Look –
they are unlike any other weapons.

14 One reed-grass will prick the ball,
another pierce the first grass,
the third pierce the second,
till a grass-chain is formed –
and with this chain
I will recover the ball."

15 Droṇa performed the feat.
The princes were amazed,
and stood there with eye-
opened wonder. They said:

16 "This is the wonderfullest feat
we have ever seen.
And now, O Brahmin ṛṣi,
retrieve the ring."

17 Mahā-brilliant Droṇa
lifted his bow, shot an arrow
which hit the ring,
and whisked it up.

18 Taking it between his fingers
he showed it to the princes.
Awe-struck, they examined it,
and said:

19 "O Brahmin, we bow to you,
O arms-expert without equal!
Who are you?
What can we do for you?"

20 These words pleased Droṇa
immensely and,
turning to the princes,
he said:

21 "Go to powerful Bhīṣma,
describe me to him,
tell him what I did.
He will understand."

22 They said, "We will," and reported
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
exactly what the Brahmin
had said and done.

23 And Bhīṣma guessed
it could only be Droṇa,
and decided to engage him
as the guru of the princes.

24 Bhīṣma, brilliant arms-expert,
went to Droṇa, respectfully
greeted him, escorted him
to the palace, and enquired
what brought Droṇa to the city
of Hastināpura. Droṇa replied:

25 "Eager to learn weapons-craft,
I went to the mahā-ṛṣi
Agniveśa, hoping to get
some instruction from him.

26 He was my guru,
I served him a long time,
as a humble matted-hair
brahmacāri should.

27 The prince of Pāñcālas,
mahā-powerful Yajñasena-Drupada
had come there for the same purpose
that I had.

28 We became friends,
he wished me well.
I loved him. He was my sakhā,
Many years passed like this.

29 We studied together,
we were boyhood friends;
whatever he spoke or did
was pleasing to me.

30 And he spoke, O Bhīṣma,
these pleasing words – 'Droṇa,
I am my mahātmā father's
favourite son –

31 When my father installs me
rājā of the Pāñcālas,
you, my friend, will enjoy
my kingdom. I promise this.

32 My kingdom, my wealth,
my pleasures will be yours."
His discipleship completed, he left –
taking my blessing with him.

33 I kept his words in my heart.
In course of time, in obedience
to my father and because
I wanted a son, I married Kṛpī,

34 Short-haired, luminous-minded, mahā-learned
daughter of rsi Gautama –
rigid-vowed Kṛpī, always
engaged in agnihotr and tapasyā.

35 I had a son by her
named Aśvatthāman,
a tremendously-powerful,
sun-effulgent boy.

36 As Bharadvāja was pleased
having me for son,
so I was pleased having
Aśvatthāman.

37 One day Aśvatthāman,
seeing a rich man's son
drink milk, began to cry.
The four points of the sky
started swirling around me.
I thought: *Why should I ask*

38 *A Brahmin owner of a few cows?*
Let me seek the owner of many.
With this in mind, O Gaṅgā's son,
I scoured the country.

39 Though I traversed the length and breadth
of the country, I could not find
one milch-cow! Some boys offered
Aśvatthāman *piṣṭodaka*,

40 Powdered rice mixed in water.
He drank it. 'Milk! Milk!'
he shouted, and danced in joy.
Poor child – how was he to know?

41 They grinned at him,
and he kept on dancing.
O Bhīṣma, that sight
I remember so vividly!

42 'Shame on Droṇa!
Droṇa has no money!
Droṇa has no money!
His son drinks *piṣṭodaka*,

43 And thinks it is milk!
The little fool dances!"
O, those words –
they drove me mad!

44 I got a grip on myself,
and I began to think:
The Brahmins reject me,
and make fun of me. Let them!

45 *I will be no one's servant,*
no, not for the world's wealth!
So I made up my mind,
and remembering my old friendship

46 With Drupada, thinking myself lucky,
I went to him.
Accompanying me were my wife
and my beloved son.

47 I had heard that my friend
was recently installed king.
His words of love and friendship
were still in my heart.

48 With these words of love
in my heart, I went to him.
I said to him, 'Drupada
I am your friend Droṇa.'

49 I went to him in friendship,
and he laughed at me!
He treated me, as if – as if
I were a low favour-seeker!
I went to him in high hopes,
and this is what he said:

50 'Friend? –
you presume a great deal, Brahmin,
to make me suddenly your friend.
You think much of yourself.

51 Foolish man!
Do you think great kings
can be friends with ill-starred
and moneyless people like you?

52 If we were equally favoured,
we could have been friends.
Kālā, which corrodes everything,
corrodes friendship too.

53 How long can friendship stay
without getting corroded?
Merciless Kāla brings with it
all kinds of ill-feeling

54 Forget this so-called friendship
that never existed.
I was friends with you, Brahmin,
with a special motive.

55 There is no friendship
between rich man and poor man,
between educated and unlettered,
between the hero and the coward.

56 You friends with me! –
Only equally brave
or equally skilled
inter-marry or are friends;
The poor and the rich
neither inter-marry nor are friends.

57 Nor is there friendship
between who knows sruti and who doesn't.
King looks down on non-king,
chariot-hero on non-chariot-hero.
And you have the presumption
to address me as friend!

58 Who are you?
I don't remember you.
I never promised you anything.
If you like, Brahmin,
you can have food and shelter
for one night."

59 With my wife and son, I left.
And I made a vow –
that vow I am determined
to fulfill without delay.

60 Bhīṣma, he insulted me!
I burned with anger.
I have come to the Kuru
to find brilliant pupils.

61 And now you have brought me here,
to Hastināpura, the elephant-gated city.
I will do as you advise.
Tell me what you would like done."

62 These were Droṇa's words
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and Bhīṣma made the following reply
to Bharadvāja's son Droṇa:

63 "All the comforts of the Kuru palace
are yours – enjoy them.
Only unstring your bow,
and teach the princes archery.

64 Luxury, kingdom, power –
whatever the Kurus have –
is yours. You are their rājā –
they are yours to command.

65 The deepest desire in your heart –
consider that fulfilled.
O finest of twice-born ṛṣis,
we are mahā-fortunate to have you."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 Mahā-radiant Droṇa, best among men
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
stayed in the palace of the Kurus,
honoured by the princes.

2 After he had settled down,
Bhīṣma brought his grandsons,
the Kuru princes, to him
to his pupils,

3 Gave him much wealth,
a well-built, attractive house
to live in, well stocked with food
and all other amenities.

4 Droṇa joyfully accepted
the Kuru princes,
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu
as his pupils.

5 One day he called them
to his side when he was alone,
and said to them,
stressing his words:

6 "My defectless pupils, one wish
above all I have in my heart –
promise you will carry it out,
after my teaching is done."

7 All remained silent (said Vaiśampāyana
to foe-destroying Janamejaya)
all except Arjuna, who promised
to fulfil his ācārya's wish.

8 Droṇa embraced Arjuna, and repeatedly
smelt his head;
tears came to his eyes,
they were tears of joy.

9 Droṇa taught them the use
of all kinds of weapons,
some of them human,
others superhuman

10 And many other princes, O bull-brave Bhārata,
also flocked to Droṇa,
best among the twice-born,
to learn the use of weapons.

11 The Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas,
princes from many lands,
the son of the Suta and Radha, Karna,
were pupils of guru Droṇa.

12 Arjuna's rival in war-skills
was Karṇa who, encouraged
to do so by Duryodhana,
often made fun of the Pāṇḍavas

13 Arjuna was a brilliant pupil.
He was eager to learn,
he did as Droṇa instructed,
he was strong, persevering,

14 And devoted to his subject.
He excelled the others in skill.
Droṇa gave the same instructions
to all the princes, but Arjuna

15 Succeeded in learning the most.
And Droṇa was soon convinced
that in the science of warfare
none would equal Indra's son Arjuna.

16 Droṇa's lessons continued
for a long time. Sometimes,
he gave his pupils a long-necked
pot called the *kumaṇḍalu*
to fetch water in, his aim
being to gain extra time

17 To give his son Aśvatthāman special training
in the use of weapons;
and to Aśvatthāman he would give
a *kumbha*, a wide-mouthed pot.

18 But Jiṣṇu-Arjuna came to know
of this and, with the help
of the *vāruṇa* weapon, he would fill
his kumaṇḍalu quickly,

19 And hurry back to his guru
simultaneously with Aśvatthāman
In this way Phalguna-Arjuna learnt all
that Aśvatthāman was taught.

20 Arjuna's guru-pūjā pleased
Droṇa greatly; his yoga
in the subtleties of war skills
made him Droṇa's favourite.

21 Droṇa noticed Phālguna-Arjuna's devotion
and said to the cook,
"Don't serve Arjuna food in the dark.
Don't tell him I told you."

22 It so happened that one day,
while Arjuna was eating,
a gust of wind suddenly
snuffed out the lamp.

23 But Kuntī's shining son Arjuna
was so sure of himself
that he ate in the dark with perfect
hand-to-mouth co-ordination.

24 Mahā-muscled Arjuna was so sure of himself
that he would practise
shooting with his bow
even in pitch-darkness.

25 O Bharatā-Janamejaya, Droṇa heard the twang
of Arjuna's bowstring at night,
and came to him, embraced him,
and said:

26 "You, my child, will with my help
be the finest archer ever.
None in the world will equal you.
I promise you this."

27 And Droṇa instructed Arjuna
on shooting from horseback,
from the backs of elephants,
from chariots, and on the ground.

28 Droṇa instructed the Kauravas
to fight with mace, sword, lance,
śakti-spear, and dart; with other weapons;
against groups of enemies.

29 Thousands of rājās and sons of rājās
hearing of Droṇa's skill,
came to Hastināpura
eager to learn from him.

30 Among them was Ekalavya
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
son of Haraṇyadhanu,
rājā of the Niṣādas.

31 But Droṇa, wise in dharma,
refused to accept a Niṣāda
as his pupil. He was guided
by the interests of the Kauravas.

32 But foe-smitting Ekalavya
bowed his head at Droṇa's feet,
and went to a forest where
he made a clay statue of Droṇa.

33 Worshipping the statue as his ācārya,
Ekalavya started practising
the use of weapons before it
without fail every day.

34 So deep was his śraddhā and yoga
for his goal and his guru,
that he soon became expert
in nocking, aiming, and shooting arrows.

35 The Kuru and Pāṇḍu princes
one day, with Droṇa's permission,
set out in their chariots
on a hunting expedition.

36 Behind them, carrying equipment
for the hunt, came a servant,
accompanied by a dog;
both taking their time.

37 They ambled their way through
the forest with casual case,
and it so happened that the stupid dog
came to where Ekalavya was.

38 The Niṣāda was black, his skin
coated with dirt, his hair matted;
he had a black deerskin on
The dog began barking at him.

39 With incredible swiftness.
Ekalavya aimed at the sound,
and shot seven arrows non-stop
into the dog's mouth.

40 The dog ran howling back,
arrows protruding from his mouth,
and stood before the Pāṇḍavas;
they could hardly believe what they saw.

41 At first they were impressed
by the swiftness and precision
of the bowman who shot seven arrows
in this manner – then ashamed.

42 So they began looking for him,
the unknown marksman in the forest.
Soon enough they stumbled on him,
practising archery –

43 A strange-looking man!
They did not know who he was.
They asked:
"Who are you? Whose son?"

44 "The son of Hiraṇyadhanu,
king of the Niṣādas,"
Ekalavya said, "a pupil of Droṇa,
struggling in the skills of warfare."

45 Armed with this information,
they hurried to Hastināpura
and narrated to Droṇa
their wonderful experience of archery.

46 Kuntī's son Arjuna brooded
on the prowess of Ekalavya,
and went privately to Droṇa,
knowing Droṇa's love for him,

47 Arjuna said, "You once embraced me,
and joyfully told me
no pupil of yours would
equal me in bow-skills.

48 And now there is one –
the son of the Niṣāda ruler –
a pupil of yours – excelling everyone.
How can this be?"

49 Drona thought for some time;
then, taking Arjuna,
the ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
with him, he went to Ekalavya.

50 He saw Ekalavya from a distance.
hair matted, his body
coated with dirt, wearing rags,
repeatedly twanging his bow-string.

51 Ekalavya saw Droṇa,
came a few steps forward,
touched both his feet
and prostrated himself on the ground.

52 The son of the Niṣāda
offered pūjā-respect to Droṇa
as a pupil would to a guru.
He stood there, with joined palms.

53 Drona said, "If you are my pupil,
O hero, where is my *dakṣiṇa-fee*?"
Ekalavya, overjoyed,
replied to Droṇa:

54 "Command me, my guru,
all I have is yours.
O greatest among Brahma-knowers,
ask from me anything."

55 Droṇa said,
"Give me your right thumb."
Ekalavya, faithful
to his promise, heard the fearful

56 Words, cut off his thumb
cheerfully, and unhestiatingly
handed it to Droṇa.
When he started shooting again,

57 Using the remaining fingers,
he found his skill gone,
his aim become imprecise,
his swiftness impaired.

58 Droṇa was pleased.
he showed Ekalavya the art
of how to shoot arrows,
using the middle and the thrid fingers.

59 And Arjuna was pleased.
His fears disappeared.
None will equal Arjuna –
Drona's words now had truth.

60 Two pupils of Droṇa
excelled in mace-duel.
They were Bhima and Duryodhana,
inveterate rivals

61 Aśvatthāman excelled
in all forms of war-skill;
Nakula and Sahadeva excelled
in wielding the sword.

62 Yudhiṣṭhira became the finest
of chariot-warriors,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna the finest of them all
in the sea-surrounded world –

63 In intelligence, in use
of weapons, in devotion
to his guru – he became
even better than Yudhiṣṭhira.

64 Droṇa taught all equally.
but it was excellent Arjuna
who became the *atiratha*,
a chariot-warrior fit to challenge
sixty thousand of the enemy
simultaneously.

65 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ill-intentioned sons
were jealous of Bhima's
incomparable strength and Dhanañjaya-
Arjuna's manifold accomplishments.

66 Bull-brave Droṇa, intending to test
the skills of his pupils,
had them assemble one day
with all their weapons.

67 Droṇa shouted:
"Quick! All of you!
String your arrows!
Aim at that vulture!

68 At my signal, shoot
at the bird's head.
I will signal
each in turn."

69 His first signal
was to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Invincible child,
aim! – ready!"

70 Yudhiṣṭhira:, great foe-subduer,
stood still,
aiming at the vulture,
as ordered by his guru.

71 Suddenly Droṇa
turned to Yudhiṣṭhira
standing with strung bow
and asked:

72 "You see that vulture
on the tree top?"
He replied, "I do."
Quickly Droṇa asked:

73 "What do you see? –
the tree, me,
your brothers, –
who?

74 Kuntī's son, Yudhiṣṭhira, replied
"I see the tree, you,
my brothers, and the bird,
again and again."

75 Droṇa looked away.
"Make room," he said, displeased.
"This target
is not for you."

76 One by one mahā-illustrious Droṇa asked
Duryodhana
and the other sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
the same question:

77 Then Bhīma and the other
Pāṇḍavas brothers,
and the visiting princes, his pupils,
and got the same reply.
Displeased,
he dismissed them.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 Smiling, Drona
said to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:
"Your turn now.
Look at the target.

2 Shoot, my son,
when I give the signal.
Stand here.
Aim."

3 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
pulled the string
to a half-circle, aimed,
and waited.

4 "What do you see, Arjuna,"
asked Drona,
"–the vulture, the tree,
and me?"

5 Pārtha-Arjuna replied,
"I see only the vulture,
I do not see you,
I do not see the tree,"

6 Droṇa,
pleased,
said to Pāṇḍu's son
the maha chariot-warrior Arjuna:

7 "The bird,
– describe it to me."
"I cannot," replied Arjuna,
"I see only its head."

8 "Shoot!" said Droṇa,
horripilating
with happiness.
And Pārtha-Arjuna fired

9 The razor-arrow that sliced
the vulture's head;
the severed head
fell on the ground.

10 Droṇa embraced Arjuna,
and thought to himself:
Drupada and his friends
are as good as finished.

11 Some time after this,
Droṇa, son of Aṅgiras,
went with his pupils
to swim in the Gaṅgā.

12 While he was swimming,
a crocodile (a messenger
of Kalā, it seemed),
snapped at his thigh.

13 Though he could easily
droṇa have freed himself,
Droṇa shouted, "Save me!
Kill the crocodile!"

14 Bībhatsu-Arjuna heard him,
and shot five sharp and deadly
arrows underwater
at the crocodile.

15 The other boys stood there,
petrified. Droṇa
was pleased with Arjuna's
swift response, and

16 Judged him his best pupil.
This was how
the crocodile, wounded
by Arjuna's arrows, released

17 Mahā-ātmaned Droṇa, and died.
Then the son of Bharadvaja. Drona
turned to the mahā-ātmaned mahā-chariot-hero
Arjuna and said:

18 "Mahā-minded one,
I give you this weapon
called Brahmāstra;
it is fierce, irresistible;
I give you also the power
to hurl it and recall it –

19 But on one condition:
do not use it against
a human foe. If you do so,
the world may explode.

20 There is no weapon more powerful
than this in the three worlds.
Cherish it with special care –
and listen to my warning.

21 Brave one! Use it only against
an other than human foe –
I have blessed it
so that it kills such a foe."

22 Arjuna with palms folded in añjali,
said, "I promise."
He accepted the weapon;
and his guru said to him:
"No bowman in the world
will ever equal you, Arjuna."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 When Droṇa was convinced
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's and Pāṇḍu's sons
had achieved excellence in war-craft,
he said to lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

2 In the presence of
Kṛpa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma,
Vyāsa and Vidura:

3 "O finest of the Kauravas,
I have finished instructing
your sons. Let them display
their skill." The rājā was pleased.

4 "Good Brahmin, I am grateful.
Tell me the place and the time
I should order the skill-show,
and how it should be organised.

5 I am blind. I am envious
of those who have sight.
They will see my sons' prowess,
and I will not.

6 Kṣatta-Vidura, do as he says.
Son of Dharma, Drona is our honoured guru.
What could be greater than
obeying the words of a guru ācārya?"

7 Vidura promised, and took leave
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
And Bharadvāja's son mahā-wise Droṇa
measured an area of land

8 That was flat and had wells and springs,
and was bushless and treeless.
There, eloquent-tongued Droṇa
offered pūjā to the planets

9 As laid down in the śāstras.
A vast concourse of people,
summoned by proclamation, gathered
on an auspicious day.

10 A huge open-air theatre-hall
was built by architects
on orders from the king;
special seating arrangements made

11 For ladies. Citizens vied
with each other for the honour
of erecting platforms: the rich
set up their own luxurious tents.

12 On the appointed day,
the rājā arrived in procession,
his ministers following,
Bhīṣma and ācārya Kṛpa leading.

13 In the large procession
were Bāhlīka, Somadatta,
Bhūriśravas and other Kauravas,
all men of eminence and dignity.

14 The theatre-hall glittered
with celestial radiance,
light shone from gold-work
strings of pearls, and *vaidūrya* gems.

15 O ever-victorious Janamejaya!
Fortune-favoured Gāndhārī
and Kuntī, and other palace ladies,
in resplendent dresses,

16 Accompanied by their maids,
joyfully climbed the platform
like the wives of the gods of Meru-mountain.
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and others

17 Rushed from the city hoping
to reach in time the spot
where the princes would display
their varied war-skills.

18 And the noise of the trumpets,
the drums, the tumultuous
shouts and cries made the crowd
look like a tempestuous ocean.

19 White his robes
White his sacred thread
White his hair
White his beard
White the flower-

20 Garland on his body
White the sandal paste
Smeared on his body –
Ācārya Droṇa appeared
Accompanied by his son
Like the Moon
Accompanied by Mars
In a cloudless sky.

21 When mighty Droṇa entered,
the mantra-chanting Brahmins
started performing the auspicious
ritual of commencement.

22 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra offered gold,
gems, and precious gifts
to Droṇa and Kṛpa as dakṣiṇā,
the guru-offering.

23 Armed with bows, arrow –
filled quivers, finger-shields,
the mighty chariot-heroes
marched into the arena.

24 Yudhiṣṭhira led them.
In priority of age,
they displayed marvellous skills
in the use of arms.

25 As the arrows whizzed above,
some spectators ducked;
others watched the spectacle
in fear and amazement.

26 Galloping by on horses
with expert ease, the princes
shot arrows carved with their names
at assigned targets.

27 So brilliant was the display,
the spectators thought they were
in the city of the Gandharvas.
They were dumbfounded.

28 Eyes expanding in surprise,
hundreds of thousands of them
shouted *Sādhu! Sādhu!*
Excellent! Excellent!

29 First, bowmanship;
then chariot-manoeuvering;
then duel on horseback
and on elephant-back;

30 Then the impressive buckling
of shields, the clash
of sword on sword
as they circled each other.

31 The nimbleness!
The shining bodies!
The grace and energy!
The steady grip
On sword and shield!

32 Then entered wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
and Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
intent on a duel, looking
like two massive single-peaked hills.

33 They girt their loins,
they invoked their strength;
they roared like two
furious, rutting elephants.

34 They circled the arena in pradakṣiṇa,
whirling their maces,
feinting and challenging
like two huge elephants.

35 Vidura took it upon himself
to describe to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Gāndhārī and Kuntī
the feats of the contenders.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

1 When Kuru-rājā Duryodhana and Bhīma
appeared in the arena,
the spectators split into two groups,
cheering both heroes.

2 Some shouted:
"Hī Kaurava rājā! Hurry!
Others countered:
"Hī Bhīma! Hurry!"

3 Wise Drona saw the assembly
heave like a stormy ocean.
he turned to his dear son
Aśvatthāman and said:

4 "Stop them, my son. Both these
mahā-heroes are skilled and valiant:
Don't let Bhima and Duryodhana
rouse passions in the people."

5 Aśvatthāman rose swiftly and said:
"This is your guru's order, Bhīma.
Gāndhārī's son Duryodhana,
this is your guru's command.
This contest is pointless."

6 Like wind-whirled waves
of oceans at yuga-end,
they circled with waving maces
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

7 Droṇa strode in,
with hand uplifted he ordered
the musicians to stop
their cloud-roaring din.

8 "With me is Pārtha-Arjuna,
more dear to me than my son!
Look at him, expert in all weapons,
Indra's son, like Indra's younger brother!"

9 Ordered by his ācārya,
Arjuna,
armed with finger shields,
arrows, bow in hand,

10 Phālguna-Arjuna stepped forward
in gold armour, before the crowd;
he shone like a cloud
shot with sunset-light,
he dazzled with rainbow-
iridescent lightning.

11 And a great shout of joy
arose from the arena –
an ululation of conches,
a medley of instruments.

12 "Kuntī's handsome son, Śrīmān Arjuna,
Pāṇḍu's third son!" they shouted.
"Mahendra-Indra's son, protector
of the dynasty of Kuru!

13 Lord of the skilled in arms,
lord of guardians of dharma,
lord of the nobly-behaved,
reservoir of good manners!"

14 Kuntī heard these loud cheers.
Her breast-milk gushed out,
it mingled with her tears,
and drenched her bosom.

15 The noise reached the ears
of lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and turning to Vidura,
he asked joyfully:

16 "This great shout, Kṣatta-Vidura,
like an ocean in commotion,
reaching up to the sky –
what is its cause?

17 "Mahārāja," Vidura replied,
"Pṛthā-Kuntī's and Pāṇḍu's son
Phālguna-Arjuna has entered the arena –
so everyone shouts."

18 "Mahā-minded Vidura, I am fortunate,
I am blessed," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra
"to have three fine Pāṇḍava flames
spring from Kuntī's sacred fuel."

19 When the excitement subsided
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Arjuna displayed before his ācārya
his expertise in arms.

20 From his *āgneya*-weapon
issued fire; from *vāruṇa*
water; from *vayava,* wind
from the *pārjanya*, clouds.

21 From the *bhauma*, the piercing of land;
from the *pārvata*, mountains;
and with the *antardhāna*,
he made them all disappear.

22 He was suddenly tall,
in the next instant, short;
now in front of his chariot,
now on it, now on the ground.

23 Guru Droṇa's favourite pupil
shot arrow after arrow, at targets
delicate, minute,
and large.

24 He shot simultaneously
five arrows into the jaws
of a moving iron boar
as if they were one.

25 The mahā-valiant hero shot twentyone arrows
straight into a cow-horn
dangling from a swinging rope
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

26 O defectless Janamejaya!
He circled the arena in maṇḍala patterns
successively showing his skill
in the wielding of sword,
bow and club.

27 O great Bhārata descendant Janamejaya!
When the show of skills
ended, the music stopped,
the excitement subsided,

28 A tremendous slapping of arms
was heard at the gate,
like thunder-claps
of colossal energy.

29 *Are the hills toppling,*
or the earth tearing apart,
is the sky reverbearating
with massive storm-clouds?

30 Such were the thoughts
that entered the minds
of the spectators as they turned
their eyes towards the gate.

31 Around Droṇa stood
the five Pāṇḍavas brothers,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons, like the five
constellations around the moon.

32 Foe-chastising Duryodhana,
and his hundred brothers
and Aśvatthāman stood up
hastily as one man.

33 Duryodhana, mace in hand,
surrounded by a hundred brothers
with raised weapons, looked
like Purandara-Indra surrounded by the gods
at the time of the fierce battle
with the Danāva antigods.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
With wonder-widened eyes
they made way for him,
the great subjugator of cities.

2 He strode in like a walking cliff:
flesh coat-of-arms,
face radiant with ear-rings,
a bow in one hand,
a sword across his loins

3 Born in a virgin womb
Karṇa
illustrious Karṇa
large-eyed Karṇa
Slayer-of-foes Karṇa
A portion of Bhāskara
the radiant, fierce-rayed Sun.

4 Like that of lions, or bulls,
or elephants, was his strength,
like the sun his glory, the moon
his beauty, fire his radiance.

5 Because he was sun-born,
he was like a golden palm-tree.
He was hard-bodied like a lion,
this handsome, versatile hero.

6 Mahā-muscled Karṇa looked around him.
Casually he praṇama-ed
first Droṇa
and then Kṛpa.

7 The crowd of people stared
in hypnotised wonder.
Curious, they asked each other,
"Who is he?"

8 And best among eloquent men,
Karṇa, son of the Sun, said to
Pākśāsani-Arjuna in a cloud-roaring voice
(not knowing it was his brother):

9 "Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, whatever you have shown
this assembly, I will show too.
Look on then –
and be amazed!"

10 He had not even finished
when all the crowd stood up
as if stirred into movement
by a hidden machine.

11 Duryodhana was overjoyed.
Doer-of-dreadful deeds Bibhatsu-Arjuna
swallowed his anger
and humiliation.

12 With Droṇa's permission,
eager-for-battle Karṇa
repeated all the feats
that Pārtha-Arjuna had shown earlier.

13 Then, O great Bharata-descendant,
Duryodhana and his brothers rose;
joyfully embracing Karṇa,
Duryodhana said:

14 "Mahā-muscled hero, I welcome you!
Deserver of courtesy,
I and the Kaurava kingdom are yours.
Command me what you will."

15 Karṇa replied:
"Your kindness is enough.
I came in friendship,
I seek only friendship.
My only other aim
is to challenge Pārtha-Arjuna."

16 Duryodhana said:
"May you enjoy life!
May you help your friends!
May your feet be placed
on the heads of your foes!"

17 This so shamed Partha-Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
that he said
to hill-high-among-the-Kurus Karṇa:

18 "Karṇa, when I kill you, you will go where
unwelcome trespassers
and uninvited advice-giver-to-
for isn't that what you are?"

19 Karṇa replied:
"Phalguna-Arjuna,
This arena is opened to all,
it is not your private show.
Strength is what makes a rājā.
Dharma depends on strength.

20 Why speak words, O Bharata,
why use the weapon of weaklings?
Speak in arrows!
Give me the chance
to slice your head off
in the presence of your guru."

21 City-subduing Arjuna,
embraced by his brothers,
with Droṇa's permission
advanced for the combat.

22 Duryodhana and his brothers
embraced Karṇa.
Karṇa lifted his bow and arrows
in readiness.

23 Clouds obscured the sky.
Lightning flashed.
Indra's bow
Scattered rainbow colours
The clouds smiled.
Their teeth showed
Like white cranes flying.

24 Because Indra showed
his favours to Arjuna,
Bhāskara-Surya scattered the clouds
over his son Karṇa

25 Phālguna-Arjuna was sheltered
in the clouds' shade,
Karṇa stood clear
in the light of the sun.

26 Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons
stood behind Karṇa;
Droṇa, Kṛpa and Bhīṣma
stood behind Partha-Arjuna.

27 The assembly, including the ladies,
split into two loyalties.
And Kuntī, Kuntī-Bhoja's daughter,
fainted.

28 Wise-in-all-dharmas Vidura
revived her,
sprinkling water scented
with sandal paste on her face.

29 She opened her eyes.
She saw her two armour-clad sons.
She was bewildered.
She did not know what to do.

30 Kṛpa saw the two heroes
with bows uplifted;
wise-in-virtue and learned
in combat-rules, he said:

31 "This is Pāṇḍu's son,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's youngest son.
He is a Kaurava.
He will meet you in duel.

32 Mahā-muscled one,
what is your lineage?
Who is your mother, your father?
what royal house is proud of you?

33 After knowing this, Pārtha-Arjuna
will fight – or not – as he pleases.
The son of a king never duels
with anyone low-born or low-charactered."

34 Karṇa flushed with shame.
His face became a yellow lotus
pelted and disfigured
by a heavy monsoon.

35 "Ācārya," said Duryodhana,
"the śāstras say three kinds
can claim royalty – nobly-born,
heroes, and leaders of soldiers.

36 If, however, Phālguni-Arjuna
    will fight no one not a rājā
I here and now
    install Karṇa king of Aṅga."

37 When the shouting died down,
    mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,
shaded by an umbrella,
    yaktail-fans waving on both sides,

38 Was placed on a golden seat;
    and mantra-learned Brahmins,
with rice-grains, flowers, pots, and gold,
    installed him king of Aṅga.

39 Then, O lion-among-kings,
    Karṇa said to Duryodhana,
"You have given me a kingdom,
    what will I give you?

40 King, best among men,
    you have only to ask."
Suyodhana-Duryodhana replied,
    "Be my friend forever."

41 Karṇa replied,
    "So be it."
They embraced each other.
    Both were happy.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

1 Trembling and perspiring,
leaning on a stick, Adhiratha,
Karṇa's father, in flapping robes,
entered the arena.

2 Karṇa saw him,
kept his bow aside,
and dutifully lowered
his wet-with-anointed-water head.

3 The charioteer Adhiratha
quickly covered his feet
with one end of his robe,
Exclaiming, "My son, my son",

4 He embraced Karṇa till his tears
wet Karṇa's wet-with-
anointed-water head. King-of-Aṅga-son
honoured charioteer-father.

5 The Pāṇḍavas saw Adhiratha,
and realised that Karṇa
was a charioteer's son.
Bhīma mockingly said:

6 "Charioteer's offspring!
You are unfit even to die
by Pārtha-Arjuna's hands. Throw away your sword!
Try a horsewhip instead!

7 You rājā of Añga!
What do you know of kingship?
What does a dog know of ghee
that's meant for the sacred fire?"

8 Karṇa looked up at the sky,
at the sun in the sky.
He drew his breath in deeply.
His lips quivered.

9 Mahā-muscled Duryodhana stood up,
like an enraged elephant
out of the lake of his
lotus-looking brothers.

10 To terrible-deed-doer Bhima
he said:
"You presume too much, Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
saying what you have said.

11 What makes a Kṣatriya? –
Strength.
Even low-born people are worthy of combat.
Don't you know
the sources of great heroes and great rivers
are unknown?

12 Don't you know
that the fire that pervades the three worlds
comes from water?
that the anti-god-destroying thunder
was fashioned
from Dadhīcī's bone?

13 Do you know
the lineage of the great god Karttikeya?
Is he Agni's son,
or the son of the Kṛttikas, or the son of Rudra-Śiva,
or Gaṅgā's son?

14 I am told
that some born Kṣatriya later became Brahmin.
I am told
Viśvāmitra and others achieved the ultimate
Brahman.

15 I hear
Droṇa, great arms-ācārya, was born in a water-pot.
I am told
Kṛpa, son of Gotama, was born in a clump of reeds.

16 And I know
how all of you were born. Tell me – could a deer
produce.
this tiger
Karṇa, sun-radiant, flesh-armoured,
graced with the auspicious marks?

17 Karṇa
deserves not the kingship of Aṅga but of the world.
He is brave,
he is strong, he is skilled in war-weapons;
he is my friend.

18 And if I
have displeased anyone here with what
I have done to Karṇa,
let that man climb his chariot and bend his bow
with his feet."

19 Loud cheers and shouts of *Hai! Hai!*
from the crowd of spectators
greeted Duryodhana's speech.
The sun set suddenly.

20 Taking Karṇa by the hand,
Duryodhana guided him
through the arena
now lit with many lamps

21 Droṇa, Bhīṣma and Kṛpa
returned to their homes
along with the Pāṇḍavas
The arena emptied.

22 O Bhārata descendant, some said
it was Arjuna's triumph,
others said it was Karṇa's,
others Duryodhana's.

23 And Kuntī was happy
because her son Karṇa
had all the auspicious marks,
and because he was king of Aṅga.

24 And Duryodhana,
because he had Karṇa
on his side, no longer feared
Arjuna's excellence in war-skills.

25 Karṇa cultivated Suyodhana-Duryodhana
with sweet and friendly words.
Even Yudhiṣṭhira felt Karṇa
had no equal in the world.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED-FORTY

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
When Drona was satisfied
that Pāṇḍu's and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
had achieved excellence in war-skills,
he thought of his guru-dakṣiṇā.

2 One day, O lord-of-the-earth Janamejaya,
he called all his pupils.
When they had assembled,
Drona saids regarding his dakṣiṇā:

3 "The only guru-tribute I want
from you is this –
Make the Pāñcāla rājā Drupada prisoner
and produce him before me."

4 "It will be done," they said,
and, climbing into their chariots,
drove out, Drona with them.
to give him his dakṣiṇā.

5 The heroes attacked the Pāñcāla,
and marched against the capital
of the mahā powerful Drupada
in a fierce offensive.

6 Duryodhana and Karṇa,
brave Yuyutsu and Duhsasana,
Vikarna and Jalasandha,
and Sulocana were some

7 Of those puissant princes,
all of them bull-brave Kṣatriyas,
who competed for honours
in that great offensive.

8 Driving splendid chariots,
and supported by cavalry,
they swept into the streets
of Drupada's capital.

9 The rājā of the Pāñcālas
saw the army sweep in,
and marched out of his palace
accompanied by his brothers.

10 Yajñasena-Drupada came out armed,
and the assembly of Kauravas,
shouting fierce war cries,
showered arrows at him.

11 Unconquered hero Yajñasena-Drupada,
driving a white chariot,
counter-attacked with a torrent
of terrible arrows.

12 Pārtha-Arjuna noticed the pride
of the Kaurava brothers,
and said to his ācārya
the finest of the twice-born:

13 "Let them do their best;
we will attack later.
I do not think they can
humble Drupada in battle."

14 Kuntī's son Arjuna said this,
and with his brothers
waited half a *krośa*
outside the city.

15 Meanwhile, Drupada
in a sudden attack
directed a shower of arrows
at the Kaurava ranks.

16 He moved so swiftly
that, though he was alone
in a chariot, they feared
many Drupadas were attacking.

17 And as his arrows
scattered on and around them,
hundreds of thousands
of conches, trumpets and drums

18 Were sounded by the Pāñcāla
from their houses. Mahārāja,
a deafening, leonine roar
burst from the mahā-ātmaned Pāñcālas.

19 The twanging of their bowstrings
seemed to tear apart the sky.
Duryodhana, Vikarṇa,
Subāhu, Dīrghalocana,

20 And Duḥśāsana, roused,
replied with a shower of arrows.
Wounded and harassed, Drupada,
unconquered archer,

21 Kept on fighting.
His chariot covered the area
like a flaming wheel,
and his arrows rained steadily

22 On Duryodhana, Vikarna,
mighty Karṇa and other Kaurava
princes and soldiers, as if
to quench their war-thirst.

23 He wounded Duḥśāsana with ten arrows,
Vikarṇa with twenty,
Śakuni with thirty flesh-shredding arrows.

24 With twentyeight arrows
he pinned down Karṇa and Duryodhana.
Karṇa left his chariot and fled.

25 He wounded Subāhu with five,
and routed others,
and screamed his war-cry.

26 Finest-of-warriors, the Pāñcāla king
demolished the chariots,
killed the horses,
and shredded the multi-coloured war-flags
of his enemies,
and roared his lion-cry.

27 Simultaneously, the citizens also hurled
clubs, maces and other weapons
on the Kaurava forces,
as clouds pour rain.

28 And then, O Janamejaya,
the citizens, young and old,
rushed out in groups
and attacked the Kauravas.

29 The Kauravas wavered,
broke, and retreated
in confusion to the Pāṇḍavas
who, hearing their horripilating outcries,

30 Paid their respects to Droṇa,
and climbed into their chariots.
Arjuna said to Yudhiṣṭhira,
"Do not join us now,"

31 And appointed Nakula and Sahadeva
his chariot-wheel protectors,
and plunged into battle.
Bhīma, mace-armed, ran in front.

32 Arjuna heard his foes shouting,
 and rushed at them.
The clatter of his chariot-wheels
 deafened the entire region.

33 Even as a *makara*-monster
 glides into sea-waters,
mahā-muscled club-wielding Bhīma,
 like rod-brandishing Daṇḍapāṇi
Antaka-Yama god of death,

34 Slipped into the ranks
 of the Pāñcāla army,
roaring all the while
 like a storm-tossed ocean.

35 Battle-expert Bhīma, Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
 raised his club and smote
the elephant-riding soldiers
 like calamitous Cosmic Time Kāla.

36 The mountainous beasts,
 their temples smashed and dripping
with blood, collapsed.
 like lightning-struck cliffs.

37 Pāṇḍava Bhīma, Arjuna's elder,
 hit right and left, bludgeoning
elephants and horses and chariots,
 killing foot-soldiers and chariot-heroes.

38 Like a herdsman driving
 loaded cattle through a wood,
Bhīma drove the chariots
 and the elephants from him.

39 Phālguni-Arjuna, eager to please
Droṇa, shot a stream
of arrows at Pṛṣata's son Drupada,
felling him from his elephant.

40 Arjuna was like the fire
at yuga-end, O rājā Janamejaya,
consuming thousands of
horses, elephants and chariots.

41 The wounded Pāñcālas and Sṛṇjayas
after a while counter-attacked, shouting
and shooting volleys of various
weapons at Pāṛtha-Arjuna.

42 Roaring like lions,
they attacked wildly.
horrific the carnage,
and fierce Pākaśāani-Arjuna's retaliation –

43 For he wrought havoc
in their ranks by releasing
a bewildering shower of arrows
with such incessant speed

44 That the Pāñcālas could not tell,
seeing Kuntī's son shoot,
when one arrow was released
and another strung.

45 The area resounded with lion-
like roars and victory-shouts.
The king of the Pāñcālas,
accompanied by his general Satyajit,

46 Suddenly rushed at Arjuna,
like Mahendra-Indra at the anti-god Śambara
Pāṛtha-Arjuna instantly blocked him
with a shower of arrows.

47 All the Pāñcālas ranks roared,
like a giant lion
before he pounces on the leader
of a herd of elephants.

48 Satyajit saw Arjuna
rush at Drupada,
king of the Pāñcālas,
and intercepted him.

49 The two heroes leapt
at each other
like Indra and Vairocana-Bali,
spreading confusion.

50 Pārtha-Arjuna shot ten sharp arrows
piercing Satyajit;
the assembly of heroes
watched in amazement.

51 Satyajit shot a hundred arrows
at Pārtha-Arjuna.
Mahā-chariot-warrior Arjuna
rubbed his bowstring.

52 To increase the speed and aim
of his arrows.
A swift burst cut Satyajit's bowstring,
and he rushed at Rājā Drupada

53 Satyajit picked up a second bow,
and let fly a fierce
volley of arrows at Arjuna
and his chariot-protectors.

54 Not outdone, unforgiving
Arjuna, eager to dispose
quickly of Satyajit, aimed
a large number of arrows

55 At his horses, pennant,
bow, clenched shooting fist,
and his chariot protector.
Satyajit saw his bow

56 Pierced repeatedly, his horses
killed, and he retreated.
When Drupada saw Satyajit retire,
he made up his mind.

57 To attack Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
with redoubled energy.
It was a marvellous display
that Arjuna then gave!

58 He sliced Drupada's bow,
cut his flagstaff,
he slaughtered Drupada's horses
and charioteer with five arrows,

59 And flinging away his bow
and discarding his quiver,
Kaunteya-Arjuna picked up a sword
and uttered a fierce lion-roar.

60 Leaping from his chariot,
he lunged at king Drupada.
Fearless, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna stood
on Drupada's chariot,

61 And, as Garuda grips a snake
from the whirling sea-depths,
Arjuna seized Drupada.
The Pāñcālas scattered.

62 Arjuna displayed his prowess
before the fleeing ranks,
and shouting his lion-roar,
he emerged from the battle,

63 And returned to his brothers.
They saw him victorious,
and prepared to lay waste
the capital of the Pāñcālas.

64 But Arjuna said, "Spare his soldiers:
Drupada is related to the Kaurava heroes.
Our purpose is achieved, Bhīma:
we have got our guru-gift."

65 Maha-Bhīma restrained himself
on Arjuna's advice
before his war-dharma
could be quenched.

66 This was how, O bull-brave Janamejaya,
the Pāṇḍavas seized Yajñasena-Drupada
and his ministers
Droṇa's guru-tribute.

67 Droṇa saw the king humbled,
wealth-stripped, kingdom-bereft,
and remembering his earlier quarrel,
he said:

68 "Your kingdom and capital
have been crushed on my otders.
Your life is in my hands.
Will you be friends with me now?"

69 He smiled to himself,
and added, "Brave hero,
do not fear for your life,
We Brahmins are forgiving people.

70 Remember the days, O bull-brave Kṣatriya,
when you and I, as children,
played together in the āśrama?
I have not stopped loving you.

71 Therefore, O lord of men,
I ask again to be friends.
As proof, O rājā,
I grant you half your kingdom –

72 Yajñasena-Drupada,
remember what you once said:
No one not a rājā
can be a sakhā-friend of a rājā.
That is why I have annexed
your kingdom.

73 The half that lies south
of the Bhāgirathī Gaṅga; the northern half,
will be mine. If this pleases you,
O Pāñcāla, let us be friends."

74 "Brahmin, it's not surprising.
A mahātmā like you, a hero
like you," said Drupada,
"should behave as you have behaved.
I am content with your offer."

75 Droṇa released Drupada
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
offered the customary courtesies,
and gave him half his kingdom,

76 Which included Mākandī,
along the banks of the Gaṅgā.
Drupada chose as his capital
the beautiful city of Kāmpilya.

77 After his defeat by Droṇa,
Drupada became king
of south Pāñcāla up to
the banks of the Carmaṇvatī.

78 And Drupada was now convinced
Kṣatriya-strength alone
could never defeat Droṇa
who possessed Brahmin-powers.

79 So he wandered all over
the world, looking for a means
of obtaining a powerful son.
Droṇa in the meantime

80 Lived in the region of Ahicchatrā,
a many-citied territory
bestowed on him by Pārtha-Arjuna
after the defeat of Drupada.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

1 One year later, Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Pāṇḍu,
was installed heir-apparent
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 He was firm-willed
patient
generous
forbearing
frank
noble.

3 In a short time, Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son, excelled
even his father in character,
courtesy and industriousness.

4 Meanwhile, wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
began training under Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma
in swordfight, mace-duel,
and chariot-encounter.

5 When his training ended,
he equalled king Dyumatsena
in strength. His prowess
and his love for his brothers grew.

6 Arjuna excelled in weapon-grip,
nimbleness, accuracy
of aim, and dexterity in
kṣura, nārāca, bhalla, vipātha,

7 And other straight, bent, and heavy weapons.
Droṇa maintained that
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsū-Arjuna excelled
in over-all proficiency.

8 One day, in the presence
of the Kurus, Droṇa told Arjuna:
"A long time age Agastya
had a pupil in arms-lore

9 Named Agniveśa –
I was guru Agniveśa's pupil.
I received from him
the Brahmāsira weapon,

10 Which has no counter-weapon;
like thunder and fire,
it can consume the whole world.
I earned it by tapasyā.

11 When my guru gave it to me
he warned, 'Son of Bharadvajā,
do not use this on a human
or anyone with little strength.'

12 This divine weapon, brave Arjuna,
I now give to you.
None else deserves it. Remember,
however, the words of Agniveśa.

13 Now, give the ācārya-dakṣiṇā to me
in front of your brothers and kinsmen."
Phālguna-Arjuna did as advised
by his guru Droṇa.

14 Droṇa said, "Defectless Arjuna,
promise you will fight me
when I fight you." Bull-brave Kaurava Arjuna
promised Droṇa this too.

15 He touched Droṇa's feet
accepting the noble advice.
A shattering paean spread
over the sea-girdled earth:

16 *None, none in the world,*
no bowman will equal Arjuna!
In club-wielding, swordsmanship,
in archery and chariot-fight,

17 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna shone. Sahadeva
learnt from Droṇa
the subtleties of state craft
and was obedient to his brothers;

18 Nakula, loved by his brothers,
learnt from Droṇa
the intricacies of soldiership
and chariot-manoeuvring.

19 Arjuna and his brothers
became so skilled in warcraft
that they killed in battle
the great Sauvīra

20 Who had once performed
a three-year yajña,
and repulsed even
the onslaughts of the gandharvas.

21 The Yavana king, unsubdued
even by Pāṇḍu, was defeated
by Arjuna. And the always-
insulting-to-the-Pāṇḍavas

22 King Vipula of Sauvīra
was killed by Pārtha-Arjuna
Arjuna's arrows routed Sumitra,
king of the Sauvīra

23 Also known as Dattāmitra,
who was always eager for battle.
Arjuna and Bhīma in one chariot
were able to vanquish
all the kings of the East
in ten thousand chariots.

24 The conquering career
continued : Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in a single chariot, subdued
the whole of the South,

25 And sent vast booty
back to the Kuru kingdom.
In this way the Pāṇḍavas
finest of heroes,

26 Conquered many kingdoms.
and expanded their empire.
When he saw the repeated prowess
of these brilliant bowmen,

27 Rājā Dhṛtārāṣṭra's mind suddenly
turned against them
so much that his all-consuming anxiety
would not even let him sleep.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

1 When he discovered Pāṇḍu's sons
displaying prowess,
mahā-lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra was troubled
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 He summoned Kaṇika,
finest among ministers
expert in mantras and rājā-śāstra
political counsel, and said:

3 "Finest of the twice-born, I cannot bear
to see the Pāṇḍavas prospering
Should I remain calm or stop them?
I will do as you advise."

4 That finest of Brahmins
was pleased
and gladly gave pointed advice
full of political wisdom.

5 "Defectless rājā, listen to me,
and do not be angry
with me for saying
what I am going to say.

6 A king's business is to rule,
to extend his might and influence.
He should not expose his weaknesses,
but profit from others' weaknesses.

7 Who rules if not a ruler?
If he rules, he is respected.
Let a king therefore rule –
and punish, when required.

8 Let him see through others,
not let others see through him.
As a tortoise hides its limbs,
he should hide his plans.

9 But when he is set on something,
let him carry it through.
No use half-extracting a thorn –
it only results in an abscess.

10 It is good that he liquidate
a dangerous enemy. He should wait
for misfortune to strike a powerful,
or an escaping antagonist –

11 And remove him swiftly and
unscrupulously. A weak enemy
should be watched. A single spark
is enough to kindle a forest fire.

12 Let him feign deafness and blindness
if he is too weak to punish.
Though his sceptre be of straw,
he should be alert as a deer.

13 If an enemy falls in your hands,
finish him off, without compunction,
even if he seeks your shelter –
any means will do, open or secret.

14 Use wealth to win over
a stubborn enemy – then kill him.
The safest foe is a dead one.
You can then sleep peacefully.

15 Whether an enemy has three, five,
or seven strategies, destroy him.
The only way to get rid
of a tree is to uproot it.

16 And after he is attended to,
pick on his friends and allies.
If, however, he is well despatched,
there's not much to fear from them.

17 If the roots are dug up,
the branches and leaves will wither.
Hiding your own weaknesses,
noting your enemies' errors,

18 Rule your kingdom, O rājā,
with a vigilant eye.
With yajnas, saffron robes,
matted locks and skin-dresses,

19 You should put your enemies
off their guard; having done so,
pounce on them like a wolf,
The cheapest way to riches

20 Is through trickery. A crooked stick
is excellent to pull twigs
and pluck sweet fruit. Crooked means
are excellent enemy-catchers.

21 Let an enemy ride you; and,
when the time comes, throw
him over like a clay pot
and smash him on the stones.

22 If he piteously begs for mercy,
ignore him. An enemy
must on no account be freed.
Kill him.

23 Or incapacitate him – with money,
with conciliation, with discord
fomented among his friends, with force,
or any other means handy."

24 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Tell me how conciliation works,
how to employ money,
how to foment discord, how to punish,
and how to destroy by other means."

25 "Listen to a story, mahārāja," replied Kaṇika.
"A long time ago, O rājā,
there lived in a forest
an incomparably devious jackal.

26 He was a really clever one.
He knew what was good for him;
he had four friends – a tiger,
a wolf, a mouse, and a mongoose.

27 They spotted a splendid deer,
the leader of a herd,
who was much too swift for them.
So they called a meeting.

28 The jackal said, 'Sir Tiger,
you seem to be singularly unable
to catch this deer – he's young,
and swift, and too clever for you.

29 I have a suggestion –
send the mouse to nibble
at the deer's hooves when he's sleeping.
Then you can pounce on him.

30 After which, I suggest we all
have a huge deer-feast.'
The mouse and tiger (said Kanika)
followed the advice to the letter.

31 The mouse bit off the deer's
hooves, and the tiger pounced.
'Bless you!' said the jackal,
'Now go have a wash before dinner.'

32 Off they trooped to a river,
as instructed by the jackal.
He in the meantime was planning
his next move.

33 First to return after his bath
was the mahā-powerful tiger.
He saw the jackal beside the dead deer,
lost in deep thought.

34 'What's the matter, O mahā-wise one?'
he asked. 'You are the wisest
of us all, I know,
but isn't it dinner-time yet?"

35 'O mahā-powerful Sir Tiger,' said the jackal,
'I'm worried by what the mouse said.
He said : *To hell with the king of the jungle!*
I killed the deer, didn't I?

36 *And he's going to enjoy the meat*
without so much as thanking me!
His boasting's got me so worried
that I can't touch this food.'

37 'Jackal, you have a point there,'
the tiger said. 'The mouse is right.
From today I will eat only
what I have killed on my own.'

38 He said this, and went away.
Some time later the mouse returned.
The jackal was well prepared.
This time he said:

39 'Bless you, little mouse!
You know what the mongoose said?
The tiger's claws have polluted
this deer-flesh. Catch me eating it!

40 *But give me your permission*
and I'll gobble up the mouse.'
Alarmed, the mouse about-turned
and scuttled off to his hole.

41 A little later, your majesty,
the wolf came along, fresh
after his pre-dinner bath.
and scuttled off to his hole.

42 The jackal said, 'Wolf, don't ask me why,
but the lord of the jungle's
furious with you. He's coming here
with his wife soon. You're warned.'

43 The wolf, never so frightened,
tensed his muscles and fled
like a flash of wind.
Exit wolf.

44 Enter mongoose.
Mahārāja, (continued Kaṇika),
this is what the jackal
said to him:

45 'Mongoose, they've fled,
all of them! A good thrashing
is what I gave them.
You want one too?'

46 'Sir Jackal,' the mongoose replied,
'if tiger, wolf, and mouse
get thrashed, I'm not the hero
for you. I'm not hungry today.'

47 And he left. Mightily pleased
with the success of his plan,
the jackal had a scrumptious
deer-feast," concluded Kaṇika.

48 "A king can learn from him
how to rule well. Exploit
the fears of a timid enemy,
concilate the brave one,

49 Seduce the avaricious
with wealth, subdue equal
and inferior with power.
O rājā, one more thing – listen –

50 If it so happens that your son, sakhā-friend,
brother, father or even guru
becomes your enemy (and you
wish to preserve your welfare),

51 Don't neglect the danger –
by curses, by mantras,
by bribes, poison, or treachery,
destroy him immediately.

52 In case both parties
are equally matched, the one
who strikes first is the one
who wins. A pompous guru,

53 Ill-motivated, or ignorant
of what needs doing and not-doing,
should be rebuked. If angered,
hide your anger behind a smile.

54 Great Bharata descendant, never show anger
when rebuking a wrong-doer.
Smile before you strike an enemy,
smile while you strike him.

55 After you have struck him,
show pity, grieve, even weep.
Try to win him over by gifts,
conciliation and kindness;

56 If he is still incorrigible,
crush him.
The worst evil-doer
shelters behind dharma.

57 Like black clouds obscuring mountains,
he obscures his evils.
Remember also to burn down
your enemy's house after killing him.

58 Banish the poor, the atheists,
and thieves from your kingdom.
By stealth or battle, poison
or bribe, destroy your enemy.

59 Act cruelly, if you must.
Bite with sharp teeth, fatally.
Crush your enemy totally.
Suspect harmless-looking types.

60 Much loss follows from
excessive trust-placing.
never trust the faithless,
trust cautiously the faithful.

61 If a too-trusted one betrays,
you will be ruined.
Before appointing them anywhere,
double-test your spies.

62 Scoundrels and fake ascetics make
fine spies in others' kingdoms.
Plant them in public gardens,
entertainment houses, temples,

63 At crossroads and drinking-halls;
in places of yajña, near wells,
on hills and in forests;
among the state officials.

64 And wherever people gather,
Let them circulate in these places,
let their words be soft,
their hearts sharp as razors.

65 Even the most vicious and heinous act
should go with a smile.
If success is your aim – first,
join your palms in āñjali, be humble,

66 Take a vow, concilate,
inspire people, and flatter them
by bowing your head at their feet.
A shrewd man is like a tree

67 With much flower and no fruit.
If there's fruit it's high up.
Though ripe, it looks raw.
Three-fold Dharma, Artha and Kāma

68 Is mixed up with three evils.
Take the good, discard the evil.
Even those who practise dharma
have to put up with

69 Two troubles – lack of wealth
and niggardly pleasure.
Kāma-seekers lack dharma and wealth.
Best is to extract maximum benefit

70 From Dharma, Artha and Kāma.
Humbly, honestly, pleasingly,
get a pure-ātmaned Brahmin's advice.
If you fall, use any means,

71 Gentle or forceful, to pull
yourself up-and try Dharma again.
Without suffering reverses,
you cannot taste success.

72 The experience of any man
who has suffered tells us this.
When misfortune strikes,
face it nobly.

73 The fool is consoled by visions
of future success, the wise man
by congenial occupations. The king
who relaxes after signing a treaty

74 With an enemy, is like a man
who opens his eyes after falling
from a tree-top where he was sleeping.
Counsel is best given in secret.

75 See with a spy's eyes,
don't let others' spies' eyes see you.
A fisherman catches
and cuts up fish, and prospers;

76 A king traps enemies,
disembowels them, and prospers.
Gauge your enemy's strength
then dig it up or mow it down,

77 Pollute it, or starve it to death.
If needy, don't beg for aid.
If aid comes, don't give
the impression you need more.

78 When on a project, leave a little
something unfinished,
for others to finish.
You may need their services later

79 That's the surest way to succeed.
But let neither friend nor enemy
guess what your plans are
until they have been accomplished.

80 Give them small inklings only
as the plans proceed.
Until danger comes,
be nervous and worried.

81 Once it has come,
face it with courage.
Like a she-mule inviting
her death by conceiving,

82 A king who trusts an enemy
who is already in his hands
invites his own doom.
Consider the future as already arrived,

83 Or you will overlook
important details while planning.
Intelligence and hard work
go hand in hand with success;

84 Right time and place are important;
Dharma, Artha, and Kāma
should conjoin. The highest success comes
when right time and right place meet.

85 Underestimate an enemy,
and he will proliferate
like the roots of a palm tree
or a spark in a forest.

86 A small fire, faggot-fed,
is soon a conflagration;
a small king with strong allies
is soon triumphant.

87 Give your enemy false hopes.
Keep on deferring his demands.
Pretend you have a strong reason,
and make it a convincing one.

88 Be like a razor,
sheathed in velvety leather.
Slice off hair coolly
when the time comes.

89 O upholder of Kuru dignity!
Treat the Pāṇḍavas
as you think best. Do nothing
that you will repent later.

90 Your majesty, you have learning
and good fortune. I know this.
You will know how best
to protect yourself against Pāṇḍu's sons.

91 As far as I can see, your majesty,
the Pāṇḍavas are very strong.
So, if you want my advice
this is what you should do.

92 Act in such a way that you
need no more fear the sons of Pāṇḍu.
Whatever measures you adopt,
do not repent them later."

93 Kaṇika said this and left
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
leaving behind him Dhṛtarāṣṭra of the Kauravas
deeply disturbed and pensive.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

1 Subala's Sakuni, Rājā Duryodhana,
Duḥśasana and Karṇa
from a wicked plot
(continued Vaiśāmpāyana)

2 With lord-of-men Dhṛtārāṣṭra's approval,
they decided to burn alive
Kuntī and her sons.
But it so happened

3 That Vidura, who could read
men's hearts in their faces,
divined the intentions
of the conspirators.

4 Defectless, ātman-illuminated
Vidura, devoted to the welfare
of the Pāṇḍavas, made up his mind
to devise an escape for them.

5 He arranged for a boat,
mechanically-equipped, with strong sails,
able to withstand wave-beat
and wind-havoc. He told Kuntī:

6 Dhṛtārāṣṭra is bent on destroying
past and future Kaurava glory.
He is obsessed with mischief,
he has discarded eternal dharma.

7 I have a boat ready, sweet lady,
wind-worthy and river-worthy.
Escape in it with your sons
from the noose of death."

8 When illustrious Kuntī heard this,
she was deeply distressed.
She and her sons boarded the boat,
and crossed the Gaṅgā.

9 On Vidura's advice they abandoned
the boat and taking their possessions
with them, they entered a forest
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

10 Well, it so happened that
a tribal woman of the Niṣādas
staying in a house of lac there
was burnt alive with her five sons.

11 An outrageous, wicked Mleccha,
Purocana, was also burnt alive.
And in this way the plan
of Dhṛtārāṣṭra's sons was frustrated.

12 In this way the maha-atmaned sons
of Kuntī, and she herself, escaped
with Vidura's help. The citizens,
however, had no knowledge of this.

13 In fact, when the people
of Vāraṇāvata saw
the house of lac reduced to ashes
they grieved inconsolably.

14 A messenger went to the rājā
with the details, saying,
"Your purpose has been fulfilled,
the Pāṇḍavas

15 Your grand plan accomplished, O king,
you are now free to enjoy,
with your sons the Kuru kingdom."
Dhṛtārāṣṭra and his sons.

16 In grief performed the funeral rites
of the Pāṇḍavas. Friends
and relatives were present. Kṣatta-Vidura
was there, and Bhīṣma, the great Kaurava.

17 "O excellent Brahmin," Janamejaya interrupted,
"I would like to know the details
of the burning of the house of lac,
and the escape of the Pāṇḍavas.

18 What a horrible and cruel deed –
such colossal wickedness!
Tell me everything, as it happened.
My curiosity overpowers me."

19 Vaiśampāyana said: Foe-smitting rājā,
I will explain everything –
both the burning of the lac house
and the escape of the Pāṇḍavas.

20 It began like this: Ill-minded Duryodhana
was troubled when
he saw Bhīma and Dhañanjaya-Arjuna
grow in glory each day.

21 The cloud-scatterer's son Vaikartana-Karṇa,
and Subala's son Śakuni
tried every means they could
to get rid of the Pāṇḍavas.

22 But the Pāṇḍavas foiled
each attempt and,
acting on Vidura's advice,
kept silent about it.

23 The people talked
of the achievements of the Pāṇḍavas
everywhere, in city and out
(Vaiśampāyana continued).

24 In courtyards and sabhās,
in meeting-places, at crossroads,
they spoke of Pāṇḍu's eldest son
as most worthy of being king.

25 They said: "Prophetic-visioned
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra, because blind,
was prevented from ruling once.
How is he ruling now?

26 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
maha-vowed and truth-devoted,
once renounced the kingdom;
he cannot become king now.

27 Let us, with due ceremony,
instal Yudhiṣṭhira king –
he is young, yet patient like an elderly man,
learned in the Vedas, truthful, compassionate.

28 He knows dharma. He respects Bhīṣma
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons;
he will give them
all pleasures and privileges."

29 But when ill-minded Duryodhana
heard these sentiments
of the followers of Yudhiṣṭhira,
he was roused to anger.

30 So great was his fury
he could not bear to hear them.
Boiling with jealousy,
he went to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

31 Dhṛtarāṣṭra was alone.
Offering pūjā-respect to his father
and recalling the people's words,
he said:

32 "*Tāta*, dear father, I hear shocking things,
words of great ill-omen.
Ignoring you and Bhīṣma, the citizens
want Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira to be king.

33 Bhīṣma will not object,
he does not seek kingship.
I think the citizens
are deliberately insulting us.

34 Pāṇḍu got the kingship
because he was deserving.
You were equally deserving,
but your blindness stood in the way.

35 If now Pāṇḍu's son gets it,
then his son will inherit it,
then his son's son, and so on –
all of them Pāṇḍavas.

36 We and our sons will
be forever excluded from ruling.
O lord of the world,
what will people think of us?

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

1 These words of Duryodhana
coupled with Kaṇika's advice
made the prophetic-visioned
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra

2 Profoundly perplexed;
sorrow assailed his heart,
and doubts filled his mind.
Duryodhana, Karṇa, Subala's son Sakuni,

3 And Duḥśāsana – these four
held a consultation.
Rājā Duryodhana approached Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and said:

4 "Find out some means
of sending the Pāṇḍavas
to Vāraṇāvata. Then we will shed
our fear of the Pāṇḍavas."

5 Dhṛtarāṣṭra pondered these words
of his son; then
he replied to Duryodhana
(continued Vaiśaṃpāyana):

6 "Pāṇḍu was always a man of dharma.
He observed dharma
with his relatives: with me
he was specially courteous

7 He was indifferent to food,
dress, and the world's pleasures.
He was devoted to me; he vowed
the kingdom was mine if I asked.

8 Yudhiṣṭhira, like him, follows dharma,
he is greatly accomplished;
he has dignity and character;
he is loved by the citizens.

9 And you want him exiled
from the kingdom of his ancestors?
How can I do this?
He has many friends.

10 Pāṇḍu took good care
of his counsellors and soldiers,
and their sons and grandsons.
Since they benefited so much,

11 Don't you think, my dear son, *tāta*,
that if I do what you tell me,
they might turn against us,
even kill us, to protest Yudhiṣṭhira's exile

12 "You are right, *tāta*, dear father,"
replied Duryodhana. "I anticipated this.
So I went ahead and
conferred honours, titles, wealth;

13 And won the people to our side.
At the present moment,
the ministers and treasury officials
are entirely in your control.

14 I am sure a way can be found,
a smooth way, I think,
to get the Pāṇḍavas sent away
to Vāraṇāvata.

15 And when I get the kingdom,
I promise you, O rājā of the Bhāratas,
I will have Kuntī and her sons
brought back to the kingdom."

16 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"That was my plan too, Duryodhana,
but I thought it was wrong,
and did not dare voice it.

17 You see, neither Bhīṣma,
nor Drona, nor Kṣatta-Vidura,
nor Kṛpa will ever approve
of exiling Kuntī's sons.

18 For them the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
have equal status.
They are followers of dharma,
and see no difference between them and us.

19 I think, *tāta*, my son, an act like that
will make us deserving of death
before these mahā-ātmaned men,
before the whole world. Why not?"

20 "Bhīṣma," Duryodhana replied,
"never takes sides; Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
is on my side; and Drona, I know,
will be on the side his son is.

21 Śāradvat's son Kṛpa
will follow Droṇa and his son.
How can be repudiate Droṇa
and his nephew Aśvatthāman?

22 Though Kṣatta-Vidura depends on us,
secretly he is a Pāṇḍava-lover.
Let him join them.
Alone, he can do us no harm.

23 Don't be afraid.
Send Pāṇḍu's sons
and their mother to Vāraṇāvata.
Do this today.

24 Do this, and remove my suffering.
There's a weird fire inside me
devouring my sleep and coursing
in my heart like a deadly dart."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

1 Rājā Duryodhana and his brothers
conspired to win over
the people to their side
by bestowing bribes and favours.

2 On instructions from Dhṛtarāṣṭra
shrewd ministers
praised the attractions of Vāraṇāvata
one day in the court.

3 "The festival of Paśupati-Śiva-
has began in the city
of Vāraṇāvata," they said.
"Thousands are flocking there.

4 What a concourse of people!
Just the glitter of their jewels
ravishes the mind!" All this they said
on orders from Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

5 And so cleverly did they say it
that the Pāṇḍavas decided
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
to pay a visit to Vāraṇāvata

6 And when king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
heard that the Pāṇḍavas
were curious to go there,
he went to them and said:

7 "*Tāta*, my children, Your studies under Droṇa
are over; you have mastered
all there is to master in war-skills
of all kinds.

8 It occurred to me that
the kingdom is secure,
statecraft attends to all matters,
everyone is well looked after.

9 My men come and tell me
every day, again and again,
there is no place in the world
all lovely as Vāraṇāvata.

10 If you, my children, *tāta*, would like
to be there and see for yourselves,
go with your friends and followers,
and enjoy yourselves like gods.

11 Give pearls and jewels away
to the Brahmins and musicians.
Enjoy yourselves there,
like radiant gods;

12 And when you have had
your fill of pleasures,
and do not want any more,
return to Hastināpura."

13 Yudhiṣṭhira read Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
mind, but felt he had no choice,
being without allies, and said,
"Whatever you say."

14 To mahā-intelligent Vidura,
to Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
to Droṇa, Bāhlīka
and the Kaurava Somadatta,

15 To the ācārya Kṛpa,
to Asvatthāman, Bhūriśravas,
to the respected Brahmins,
elders, ascetics, and counsellors,

16 To the noble purohitas,
to illustrious Gāndhārī,
Yudhiṣṭhira, speaking slowly
and gently, said:

17 "Because Dhṛtarāṣṭra
has advised us, we go
with our friends and followers
to festive Varanavata

18 May your kind words
go with us!
May we prosper,
may no evil befall us!"

19 The Kauravas heard Yudhiṣṭhira,
Pāṇḍu's son, speak thus,
and all of them spoke
these happy words:

20 "Sons of Pāṇḍu,
may the blessings of the elements
go with you!
May your path be smooth,
may nothing inauspicious
obstruct you!"

21 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons performed the rituals
for obtaining their royal right,
and with full preparations
set out for Vāraṇāvata.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

1 After this decision
of the Pāṇḍavas, approved
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, ill-minded
Duryodhana was delighted.

2 O bull-brave Bharata! He summoned Purocana
in secret and, pressing
the man's right hand,
he said, "Purocana,

3 This world full of riches,
is mine, and equally yours.
The riches are yours too,
to look after if you will.

4 Who can I trust but you?
There is no one
in this palace I have
more faith in than you.

5 So, *tāta*, my friend, let what follows remain
a secret between you and me.
I want an enemy removed, cleverly.
I want you to do it.

6 Dhṛtarāṣṭra has sent
the Pāṇḍavas to Vāraṇāvata.
Because Dhṛtarāṣṭra wants it,
they will make merry in that city.

7 Yoke swift mules
to your chariot and rush
to Vāraṇāvata
today, if you can.

8 Get a mansion built there,
on the city's outskirts.
with four halls; furnish
it opulently; guard it.

9 And see that you use
only hemp, resin, lac
and other inflammable materials
when you build.

10 Take mud and clay,
mix it with ghee,
oil, fat, and plenty of lac,
and plaster the walls.

11 Strategically, in different
corners of the palace,
place hemp, oil, ghee, lac,
and wood; do this cleverly,

12 So that neither the Pāṇḍavas
nor anyone else, even
after the closest inspection,
can discover the ruse.

13 Build the mansion and,
when Kuntī and the Pāṇḍavas
arrive, lavishly honour them,
and make them comfortable on it.

14 The seats, relaxing places,
the beds must be the finest
possible – divine almost.
Say my father orders it.

15 See that all this is done
without word reaching the ears
of Vāraṇāvata's citizens –
until my mission's accomplished.

16 And when they are sleeping,
completely unsuspecting,
beginning with the gate
set fire to the place.

17 Everyone will think
they perished in the fire,
and declare it an accident.
None will blame us."

18 Purocana promised to do
as ordered, and immediately
sped to Vāraṇāvata
in a swift mule-driven chariot.

19 O rājā Janamejaya! Obedient to Duryodhana,
he wasted no time.
He fulfilled prince Duryodhana's desire
to the minutest detail.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

1 Climbing into their chariots
yoked to wind-swift horses,
the Pāṇḍavas left. Earlier,
they sadly touched Bhīṣma's feet,

2 And in the same way
honoured Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
mahā-ātmaned Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Vidura, and others.

3 They paid their respects
to the Kuru elders,
they embraced their equals,
they were respected by the children;

4 They half-circled in pradakṣiṇa
the elderly palace ladies, their mothers,
they bid farewell to the citizens
before leaving for Vāraṇāvata.

5 Mahā-learned Vidura and other
bull-brave Kauravas, including the citizens,
so Kauravas, rowfully followed the Pāṇḍavas
some distance outside the city.

6 Seeing Pāṇḍavas unhappy
as they were preparing to leave,
some of Hastināpura's
citizens murmured:

7 "Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra has not
in this case been impartial.
He means ill. His eyes
do not follow the path of dharma.

8 Ill-deed-untouched Yudhiṣṭhira,
powerful Bhima and Dhañanjaya-Arjuna
will never have anything
to do with wickedness.

9 And if they remain so,
so will Madri's mahā-ātmaned sons.
The kingdom is theirs, from Pāṇḍu;
and this Dhṛtarāṣṭra does not like.

10 But how could Bhīṣma
allow this extreme adharma?
How could Bhīṣma allow
Pāṇḍavas to be sent to Vāraṇāvata

11 Śānťanu's son rājā-ṛṣi Vicītravīrya
and the great Kuru, Pāṇḍu,
were both to us
like our own fathers.

12 Now that Pāṇḍu, tiger-among-men,
is in the god-world,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra cannot bear
to look after the Pāṇḍavas,

13 We will not allow this!
We will leave this city,
we will leave our houses,
and follow Yudhiṣṭhira,

14 Dharmaraja Yudhiṣṭhira
overheard them, and pondered.
Weakened-with-sorrow he said
to the murmuring citizens:

15 Dhṛtarāṣṭra is our father,
our superior, our guru;
he is lord of the earth,
he must be implicity obeyed

16 And you are our friends.
If you mean us well,
Keeping to our left, wish as well,
and return to your homes.

17 And when the time comes
when we really need your help,
then come forward and help us
to shine and prosper."

18 After they had left,
Vidura, wise in dharma and truth,
spoke to the eldest Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
in order to warn him:

19 *prājñaḥ prājñapralāpajñaḥ*
pralāpajñamidaḥ vacaḥ
prājñaḥ prājñaḥ pralāpajñaḥ
prālapajñaḥ vacohavravrīt

20 Wise was Vidura in
word-weaving;
Wise was Yudhiṣṭhira
in world-unweaving.

21 Vidura, the sage, who knew how
to speak in riddles,
said to the youth,
who understood them.

22 "A wise man," whispered Vidura,
"is one who knows in advance
his enemies' intentions,
and prepares himself accordingly.

23 Steel is not the only weapon
of piercing the body.
There are other means.
Who knows this, survives.

24 He survives who knows
that straw-consumer and dew-drier
cannot harm those
who burrow holes in the ground.

25 A blind man does not know
where to go, how to go.
A man without patience
is a blind man. Keep awake.

26 If your enemy tricks you
into a trap not made of steel,
remember how the porcupine
in his hole escapes a fiery death.

27 Travelling brings knowledge.
Keep moving. Let the stars
in the sky guide you. Unite
the five senses, and escape oppression."

28 Yudhiṣṭhira listened carefully.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Pāṇḍu's eldest son,
said to wisest-of-the-wise Vidura:

29 "I understand."
Vidura, placing Yudhiṣṭhira,
on his right in pradakṣiṇa, bid the Pāṇḍavas
farewell, and returned to the city.

30 After Vidura, Bhīṣma,
and the citizens had gone,
Kuntī approached Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
and said:

31 "With did Kṣattā-Vidura tell you,
in the presence of the others?
I couldn't make out a word
yet you said, 'I understand.'

32 Tell me what he said,
    if it is not secret.
I am eager to know
    what both of you discused."

33 Yudhiṣṭhira replied: "Dharma-devoted Vidura
    mentioned a lacquer house,
a fire-trap. He suggested
    a way of escaping from it.

34 He whispered that the man
    who controls his senses
rules the world. To which
    I replied, 'I understand.' "

35 When the star Rohiṇī
    was in the ascendant,
on the eighth day of
    the month of Phālguna,
the Pāṇḍavas left
    for the city of Vāraṇāvata

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

1 Word spread that the Pāṇḍavas
were coming, and the citizens
of Vāraṇāvata flocked
in thousands, joyfully,

2 By various means of transport,
to catch a glimpse
of the princes. They brought
auspicious customary gifts.

3 The moment they were spotted,
the Pāṇḍavas were surrounded;
the citizens of Vāraṇāvata
welcomed them, shouting *Victory!*

4 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
best among men, so surrounded,
looked like thunder-wielding
Vajra-pāṇi-Indra among the gods.

5 Welcomed by the citizens,
and thanking them for the reception,
the Pāṇḍavas entered
the populous, enchanting city.

6 Their first duty, O lord of the earth,
was to find out the houses
of ritual-practising Brahmins,
and visit them.

7 Their second was to go
to the homes of the officials;
then they visited the charioteers,
the Vaiśyas, and Śūdras.

8 Honoured by the citizens,
they retired, O bull-brave Bhārata,
to a mansion, Purocana
leading, they following.

9 Purocana supplied them
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
the choicest food and drink,
beds, carpets, and seats.

10 They continued to live there,
with the citizens serving them,
and Purocana doing everything
to make them comfortable.

11 After ten nights had passed,
Purocana recommended to them
a house called the "Blessed Abode"
(actually far from blessed).

12 The Pāṇḍavas, richly dressed,
rose like lions went to the house,
and entered like Guhyakas
on Mount Kailāsa.

13 After inspecting it,
all-dharma-knowing Yudhiṣṭhira
whispered to Bhīma,
"Highly inflammable.

14 Not a doubt of it.
I can smell fat,
and lac mixed with ghee –
all inflammable meterials.

15 Superb workmanship.
Our enemies have good craftsmen.
Hemp, and straw, mud
and bamboo stalks,

16 Soaked in ghee,
going up in flames –
First wicked Purocana honours us,
then he burns us.

17 No doubt his wickedness
is encouraged by Duryodhana.
Mahā-intelligent Vidura knew – and warned me.
He is our well-wisher, Bhīma –

18 Our father's younger brother,
Vidura loves us. He told me
all about this death-trap,
Duryodhana's supreme treachery."

19 Bhīma said, "If you are sure
this house is a fire-trap,
let us return to the place
where we were staying."

20 "And rouse suspicion? No,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira. "Rather,
let us keep our eyes and ears open,
and find a means of escape.

21 If Purocana ever suspects
that we've stumbled on his plan,
he may panic and frantically
burn us and the house down.

22 He has no scruples,
no fear of adharma;
he is a blind slave
to the whims of Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

23 If we perish, it is unlikely
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma will be overly upset.
Why should he unnecessarily
antagonise the Kauravas?

24 Of course it is possible
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma (and other noble Kauravas)
will put on a show of dharma.
(It will help us little, though.)

25 If we run away in fear,
Duryodhana, greedy
for the kingdom, will set spies
on us to get rid of us.

26 Duryodhana has everything –
he has position, power;
he has friends, allies, wealth;
we have nothing.

27 Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and Purocana are wicked.
Let us out-trick them
by living in disguise.

28 For some time let us
become hunters and nomads.
Let us become familiar
with all routes of escape.

29 Inside our room, tonight,
let's start digging a tunnel.
If we can keep it secret,
we are safe from fire.

30 So let us live here,
and give neither Purocana
nor the citizens the least hint
that we suspect anything."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

1 A friend of Vidura
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
an expert tunnel-digger,
came to the Pāṇḍavas and said:

2 "I am a tunnel-digger.
Vidura has sent me.
I am at your service.
Let me know what I should do.

3 Vidura said to me,
Go to the Pāṇḍavas
and help them in every way,
I await your orders.

4 Purocana intends
to set fire to your house
on the fourteenth night
of the dark fortnight.

5 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ill-minded
son Duryodhana has plans
to burn alive the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
and their mother.

6 Vidura used *mleccha* speech,
and you replied, 'So be it'.
This is my credential."
Kuntī's truth-speaking son Yudhiṣṭhira said:

7 "My dear friend, I know
you are a close and trusted friend
of Vidura;
I know you are deeply

8 Devoted to him.
    There is no need of ours
that learned and noble Vidura
    does not anticipate.

9 You will be ours,
    as you are his.
Make no difference
    between him and us.

10 Purocana built this house
    on Duryodhana's orders
in order to destroy us.
    This I know.

11 Wicked, persistent
    ill-minded machinations,
using wealth and allies,
    Duryodhana hounds us.

12 Save us from the fire-trap.
    If we are burnt to death,
the deepest desire of Suyodhana-Duryodhana
    will be fulfilled.

13 Next door is the vast
    store-house of wicked-minded Duryodhana,
materials from which were used
    to build the house of lac.
It has high walls,
    escape that way is impossible.

14 Vidura was the first
    to discover the plot.
In his goodness
    he revealed the secret to me.

15 The danger that he foresaw
now threatens to destroy us.
Show us how to escape,
without rousing Purocana's suspicions."

16 "I will" replied the digger.
Taking many precautions
he began work on a long tunnel
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

17 The tunnel extrance was located
in the centre of the house.
Wooden planks covered it.
It was on floor level.

18 This was done in order
not to rouse any suspicion.
Purocana kept a constant vigil
at the house.

19 At night the Pāṇḍavas, armed,
lived in the tunnel.
During the day they hunted
in the nearby forests.

20 Always alert, they deceived
Purocana with shows of trust
and contentment; actually,
they were restless and worried.

21 The Vāraṇāvatans knew nothing
of these going-on. Only
Vidura's trusted tunnel-digger
knew. No one else.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

1 One year passed. Purocana
saw the Pāṇḍavas happy
and unsuspecting,
and inwardly he rejoiced.

2 Wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira, seeing Purocana
relaxed, one day
said to Bhima and Arjuna
and the twins Nakula and Shadeva:

3 "Wicked Purocana's under the impression
we suspect nothing
We have the scoundrel in our hands.
The time to escape is now.

4 We'll set fire to the storehouse,
let Purocana burn to death,
leave six other dead bodies here,
and slip out, unseen."

5 It so happened, mahārāja,
that, on an alms-giving day,
Kuntī had occasion to feed many Brahmins.
Some women were fed too.

6 The ate and drank hugely,
enjoying themselves to excess,
and late in the night,
with Kunti's permission, went home.

7 As fateful Kāla would have it,
a Nīṣada woman and her five sons
came to the feast,
and gorged themselves to exhaustion.

8 She and her sons drank
till drunk, and, O lord of men,
unable to stir, more dead
than alive, decided to spend

9 The night in the lac house.
That night when all were sleeping,
a tremendous thunderstorm struck
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

10 Purocana was sleeping
when Bhīma set fire to his room.
Then the other Pāṇḍavas
torched the doorway,

11 And quickly, in various places,
the rest of the lack house.
Satisfied that the entire house
was ablaze,

12 The foe-subduing Pāṇḍavas
slipped into the tunnel
one by one, Kuntī with them.
The heat and crackle of the flames

13 Woke up the citizens.
They rushed out,
saw the house furiously aflame,
and sadly said to each other:

14 "It must have been Purocana.
He built this house, and burnt it
on Duryodhana's orders
and sealed his own doom.

15 Aho! Shame on Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
so prejudiced is he!
To burn the innocent sons of Pāṇḍu
as if they were his enemies!

16 Evil, scheming Purocana
in the process of burning
the illustrious Pāṇḍavas, trapped himself,
and got burnt to death."

17 Moaning the calamity,
the Vāraṇāvatans surrounded
the smouldering house,
and passed the night there.

18 Meanwhile, the Pāṇḍavas
and their sorrowing mother
had escaped through the tunnel,
unseen by anyone.

19 The foe-subduing Pāṇḍavas,
sleepless and fearful,
were unable to flee
as swiftly as they wished.

20 So mighty, wind-swift Bhīma
picked up his mother and five brothers
to ensure haste
(added Vaiśampāyana)

21 Bhīma of great strength
and stamina, wolf-waisted Bhīma,
lifted his mother on his shoulder,
the twins on both his sides,

22 Picked up Yudhiṣṭhira
and Arjuna in both arms,
smashed trees with his chest,
smote the earth with his feet,
and pressed steadily on.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

1 Meanwhile insight-gifted Vidura
sent to the forest
a man of unimpeachable character
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 He went where instructed,
and saw the Pāṇḍavas
and their mother measuring
the depth of a river.

3 This man was the spy
who had revealed to mahā-ātmaned Vidura
all the machinations
of ill-minded Duryodhana.

4 For which reason Vidura
sent him to Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons;
and he showed them
a mind-swift, wind-swift boat,

5 Fitted with various gadgets,
decked with flags, sturdily
constructed by shipwrights
to withstand stormy waves.
The boat was moored on the sacred bank
of the Bhāgirathī-Gaṅgā.

6 To establish his credentials
as Vidura's messenger,
he said, "O Yudhiṣṭhira,
this is what Vidura told you:

7 *He survives who knows*
that straw-consumer and dew-drier
cannot harm those
who burrow holes in the ground.

8 Vidura has sent me.
You can depend on me.
Besides, learned-in-all-ways Vidura
asked me to tell you:

9 'O son of Kuntī,
you will defeat in battle
Karṇa, Śakuni, and Duryodhana
and his brothers.'

10 The boat waits for you
May its journey be pleasant.
May it take you swiftly
away from this place."

11 He saw the brothers
and their mother apprehensive,
so, climbing along with them
into the boat, he said:

12 "Vidura has embraced you, and affectionately
smelt your heads; he asked me
to make your journey auspicious,
to shield you from harm."

13 With these words, O Indra-among rājās Janamejaya,
the man piloted the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
carefully over the Gaṅgā's waters
to the opposite bank.

14 When they had reached
the opposite bank safely
he shouted *May victory be yours!*
and returned to his home.

15 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas sent word
of their Gaṅgā-crossing to Vidura,
and secretly and hurriedly
pressed on, none else knowing.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

1 Next morning a large crowd
of Vāraṇāvatans
came to the smouldering lac house
to see what had happened.

2 They extinguished the fire,
confirmed the house was made of lac,
and discovered Purocana's body
charred in the ruins.

3 They murmured among themselves:
"None except wicked Duryodhana
could have conceived of such a plot
to get rid of the Pāṇḍavas

4 It seems certain that he,
with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's knowledge,
has killed the Pāṇḍavas;
but why wasn't he stopped?

5 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Vidura, Kṛpa,
and all the other Kauravas
have strayed from dharma.

6 Our duty is to send
this message to ill-ātmaned Dhṛtarāṣṭra
At last you have succeeded –
you have killed the Pāṇḍavas."

7 They searched among the embers
for the bodies of the Pāṇḍavas,
and found the charred corpses
of the Nīṣada woman and her five sons.

8 The tunnel-digger had managed
to re-cover the tunnel's mouth
with charred wood pieces so cleverly
that not one citizen noticed it.

9 The citizens sent a messenger
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra informing him
that Purocana and the Pāṇḍavas
had perished in the fire.

10 When this mahā-unpleasant news
was conveyed to him,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra moaned the deaths
of the Pāṇḍavas and their mother.

11 He said:
"It is not just the Pāṇḍavas
who have died today –
my brother rājā-Pāndu
mahā-illustrious hero,
has perished in the fire too.

12 Go, men, quickly
to Vāraṇāvata, and
collect the bodies.
Let all the funeral rites
be performed for the heroes
and the Kunti-rājā's daughter.

13 Let their bones
be purified by the rites,
may noble charities follow.
And let the friends and relatives
of those who have perished
hurry to Vāraṇāvata

14 Whatever is needed,
whatever selfless deeds enjoined –
may those be performed.
May nothing be stinted
in the funeral ceremonies
of Kuntī and the Pāṇḍavas."

15 Saying this, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Ambikā's son, surrounded
by his relatives, offered water-homage
to the spirits of Pāṇḍu's sons.

16 Bhīṣma and other Kauravas
gathered near the bank
of the Gaṅgā to offer
similar water-homage.

17 They each had a single dress on.
Their discarded head-coverings,
ornaments, and other finery
accentuated their joylessness.

18 He wept. The others wept.
Hā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Hā great descendant of Kuru!
Some wept : *Hā Bhima!*

19 Others wailed : *Hā Phālguna Arjuna!*
Others : Hā the twins!
Hā Kuntī-mātā!
They offered water-homage.

20 The citizens also mourned
the deaths of the Pāṇḍavas.
Vidura mourned formally:
he knew the truth.

21 Seeing Bhīṣma lamenting,
he whispered, "Lord among men,
do not grieve. Strict-vowed sire,
the Pāṇḍavas are not dead.

22 What needed to be done,
I did – at the crucial time.
Great Bharata, it is not necessary
for you to offer water-homage."

23 Bhīṣma took Kṣatta-Vidura's hand,
and pulled him to a corner
where they could not be heard.
Still weeping, he said:

24 "But how can this be, *tāta*, dear one?
How did Pāṇḍu's
mahā-chariot-warrior sons escape?
Even as Garuḍa saved his mother,

25 Did you succeed in saving them?
Tell me how it was done –
tell me how you stopped
this mahā-fear from falling on us."

26 Because Bhīṣma enquired,
dharmātmā-Vidura replied
to the worker-of-marvellous-deeds Bhīṣma
(said Vaiśampāyana):

27 "Dhṛtarāṣṭra Śakuni
and rājā Duryodhana had decided
once and for all to kill
the Pāṇḍavas and their mother.

28 When Duryodhana conceived
of the plot of burning them alive
in a lac house, I arranged
to have an expert tunnel-digger

29 Devise a large tunnel
from the centre of the house;
and before the fire spread,
the Pāṇḍavas slipped into the tunnel,

30 And escaped. They and their mother
are now far away,
all with my help. I am certain
that they are alive.

31 There is no need to mourn.
Until the propitious time
when their return is warranted,
they will stay in hiding.

32 They will move from place to place,
and no one will know.
All the right time, Yudhiṣṭhira
will show himself to the earth's kings."

33 Meanwhile, the mahā-powerful
six of them, had slipped
away from Vāraṇāvata,
and they came to the Gaṅga.

34 Helped by expert boatmen
and a favourable current,
they quickly alighted
at the opposite bank of the river.

35 They abandoned the boat,
and moved southwards,
guiding themselves at night
by the light of the stars.

36 It was a difficult journey.
Finally. O rājā Janamejaya,
they reached a dense forest.
They were tired, thirsty, sleepy.

37 Yudhiṣṭhira said to mahā-valiant Bhīma,
"Here we are, lost in a forest,
with no idea where we are;
what do we do now?

38 We are not even sure if wicked Purocana
is dead or alive.
How long can we continue
keeping our presence a secret?

39 Pick us up as you did earlier,
and let us move on
You are the strongest among us,
you are wind-swift."

40 Bhīmasena heard Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
picked up his mother and brothers,
and the mahā-powerful hero pressed on
(said Vaiśampāyana)

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

1 As Bhima pushed forward,
his chest hit the branches
of forest trees, and they shook
(Vaiśampāyana continued).

2 And his thighs, moving vigorously,
raised currents of strong wind
like storms in the month of Jyeṣtha-Āṣādha;
he trampled plants and creepers,

3 Smoothing a path for himself.
The kings-of-the-forest,
the fruit-and-flower-laden trees
bowed to his might.

4 Like an angry sixty-year-old rutting
elephant-leader of a herd,
juices streaming down the three parts
of his body – Bhīma pushed on.

5 So swift was his pace, like that
of Garuḍa-Tārkṣya or Maruta-Vaya,
that the Pāṇḍavas, clinging
to him, felt giddy.

6 He swam across swollen streams
that seemed impassable.
Often the Pāṇḍavas, afraid
of Duryodhana, disguised themselves.

7 Bhīma carried his illustrious,
delicately lovely mother
on his back over rough terrain
near the banks of rivers.

8 O Janamejaya! Bull-brave Bharata! At night
they came to an eerie forest
with hardly any fruits, roots, and water,
and filled with cruel beasts.

9 A fearful twilight fell.
The noises grew fiercer.
Nothing could be seen.
A howling wind blew.

10 Many large and small trees, O rājā,
snapped and fell;
the ground was littered
with fruits, dry leaves and creepers.

11 The Pāṇḍavas, exhausted,
thirsty, and sleepy,
found themselves unable
to proceed a step further.

12 Thirsty and hungry, they
camped in that mahā-forest.
Kuntī, parched, said distressfully
to her five sons:

13 "I am Kuntī, mother
of five Pāṇḍavas, and I thirst
for water sitting in their midst!"
She said this again and again.

14 Bhima heard, and affection
for his mother stirred compassion
in his heart, and he stood up,
and pushed on.

15 They entered a deep,
dreadful-looking forest,
in the middle of which was
a straddling, beautiful *nyagrodha*-pipal tree.

16 Bull-brave Bharata Bhīma left them there,
saying, "Stay here,
while I go and fetch water
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

17 For I hear the sweet
cries of the sārasa cranes.
There must be a big lake
somewhere nearby."

18 Commanded by his eldest brother
who said "Go", Bhīma went.
He came to the lake
where the *sārasa* were calling

19 Because he loved his brothers,
he went for their sake.
He drank the lake's water,
he bathed in it; drenching

20 His upper garment he brought
water for them, covering
the two-*krośa* distance in no time.
breathing deep snake-sighs he looked

21 At his mother and brothers
lying on the ground.
Grief moved wolf-waisted Bhīma,
and he lamented:

22 "How unfortunate I am –
that I should see
my mother and brothers sleeping on the ground!
What sight more painful than this?

23 The softest beds in Vāraṇāvata
were not good enough for them.
And now fate forces them
to sleep on the bare ground.

24 Foe-crushing Vasudeva's sister,
rājā Kantibhoja's daughter Kuntī,
most illustriously graced
with all the auspicious marks,

25 Daughter-in-law of Vicitravīrya,
wife of mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu,
mother of us five Pāṇḍavas,
lustrous like a lotus-petal,

26 Softly lovely, gentle
and loving worthy
of the most luxurious of beds,
now sleeps on the bare ground!

27 Mother of sons
of Dharma, Indra and Vāyu
always-sleeping-in-palaces lady,
now sleeps on the bare ground.

28 Will my eyes ever witness
a sight more painful than this –
four of the finest tigers-among-men
sleeping on the bare ground?

29 Always-dharma-cherishing Yudhiṣṭhira, deserving
of the kingship of the three worlds,
tired out like any ordinary man,
sleeping on the bare ground! –

30 Arjuna, matchless among men,
cloud-blue-complexioned Arjuna,
sleeping on the bare ground! –
What sight more painful than this?

31 The twins, as handsome
as the Aśvins among among the gods,
sleep now on the bare ground
like ordinary beings.

32 A man who has no jealous
and maligning relatives is happy,
he can be compared
to a single tree in a village.

33 And when that single tree turns green
and flowers, and fruits appear,
all gather round it, venerating
it as a sacred tree.

34 Among those with many brave
and dharma-following relatives
also pass their days happily
without worries of any kind.

35 They grow in power and prosperity,
making friends and relatives happy;
they spend their lives helping each other,
like the trees of the forest.

36 Ill-ātmaned Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his sons banished us;
and we were lucky to escape
a gruesome death by fire.

37 Escaping from fire,
we sleep under this tree.
From one suffering to another –
and what next?

38 Enjoy yourselves,
ill-thinking sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
The gods are on your side;
because Yudhiṣṭhira prevents me

39 From killing you, you live.
Live then, you scoundrels –
safe from my anger,
which would have despatched you,

40 In one stroke, sons, ministers,
Karṇa, Sakuni, to the land
of Yama! I can do nothing,
if Yudhiṣṭhira remains calm.

41 It is good for you, you scoundrels,
that the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas,
Yudhiṣṭhira, is a dharmātmā."
Bhīma said this inflamed,

42 Squeezed his palms and sighed
in deep anguish.
Like an extinguished fire
blazing up suddenly, his anger

43 Rekindled seeing his brothers
sleeping on the bare ground,
like simple, trusting mortals.
He thought:

44 *There must be some living-places*
not far off from here.
They should be awake instead of sleeping.
Well. I will keep watch.

45 *When they wake up, they'll quench*
their thirst with this water.
Bhima made up his mind,
and kept awake all night.

SECTION ONE HUNDREDFIFTY-FOUR

1 A small distance from them,
living in a śāla tree,
was a raksasa named Hiḍimba
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 Lithe,
Mahā-virile,
Black
Like rain clouds.
Red-eyed.
Cruel.
Fearful.

3 Red
Moustache.
Red
Beard.
Locks.
Long
Belly.
Famished.

4 Shoulders
And neck
Like a massive tree
Ears
Like arrows.
Ghastly-
Looking.
His eyes
Lighted
On the sleeping
Mahā-chariot-warriors,
The Pāṇḍavas

5 Red-eyed
Fierce-looking
Hungry
Thirsty
He looked around
And saw
The Pāṇḍavas.

6 He yawned.
He shook
His uplifted locks
Scratched them
With his fingers.
He yawned
A massive yawn.

7 He longed
For human flesh.
Cloud-massive
Body.
Long sharp
Teeth.
Dazzling-red
Face.

8 Smelling
Man-scent,
He said
To his sister,
"At last!
My favourite
Food!

9 My mouth
Waters . . .
My sharp
Eight teeth
Will bite

10 Delicious
Meat.
I'll crunch
The throat
And veins,

11 And drink
Hot
Fresh
Bubbly
Blood.
Go!
Find out
Who they are
Sleeping
Under the tree.

12 The tangy
Strong
Man-scent
Tickles
My nostrils.
Kill them.
Bring them
To me.

13 They are sleeping
In my kingdom.
Don't fear.
We'll tear
Their flesh,

14 And gobble
The meat.
Go, now!
We'll eat
Our fill
Of man-flesh,

15 And dance and dance and dance
When the feast
Is over."
Hiḍimba ordered her,
Hiḍimbā.

16 His sister, commanded
to do so, did his bidding.
O Janamejaya, great Bharata, she went
where they were sleeping.

17 The rākṣasī saw four Pāṇḍavas
and Kuntī, asleep;
beside them, invincible Bhīma
kept watch.

18 She saw Bhīmasena,
handsome like a *śāla*-tree,
of incomparable good looks,
and desire overcame her.

19 She said to herself:
"His skin is like molten gold;
he is strong, lion-shouldered,
he shines; his neck is shaped
like a conch, his eyes like lotuses;
I must have him for husband.

20 I refuse to obey
the cruel command of my brother.
A woman's love for her husband
is greater than her love for her brother.

21 If I kill him, my brother
and I will enjoy him briefly.
If I do not kill him,
I will enjoy him for ever."

22 She could assume any form
at will. Choosing a lovely girl's
she slowly approached
the mighty-armed Bhīmasena.

23 Divine ornaments on her body,
she approached Bhima,
graceful, coquetish, smiling shyly.
She said:

24 "Bull-brave mortal, where are you from?
who are you? and who
are these god-like men
sleeping beside you?

25 Defectless one, who is this lovely lady
with skin the colour of beaten gold,
sleeping unafraid in the forest,
as if in her own home?

26 Don't you know
of the rākṣasas here?
This forest is the abode
of wicked-atmaned Hiḍimba.

27 He is my brother. O god-like man,
he sent me here
for a wicked purpose – to make for him
a feast of your flesh.

28 Because you shine like a god,
I tell you this truly –
I want none to be my husband.
but you – make me yours.

29 You are learned in dharma –
do to me as dharma dictates.
Desire floods my mind and body.
be mine; and make me yours.

30 I will save you from
the flesh-eating rākṣasa.
Defectless one, be my husband.
Let us live on mountains slopes.

31 I can fly in the sky,
and I fly when it pleases me.
If it pleases you, enjoy
with me these priceless pleasures."

32 "Rākṣasī," replied Bhīma,
"what man in this world
will forsake his helpless mother,
elder and younger brothers?

33 Can a man like me leave
his sleeping mother and brothers
to be food for a rākṣasa
and gratify his own lust?

34 This is my elder brother, he
is like a guru to me.
He is unmarried. How can I be a *parivettā* –
marry before he does?

35 The rākṣasī replied:
"Wake them. I will do
what will please you. I will save all of you
from the man-eating rākṣasa."

36 "Rākṣasī," replied Bhīma,
"do you think I am so afraid
of your brother that I will wake
my peacefully sleeping mother and brothers?

37 Gentle girl, which rākṣasa
is a match for my strength?
Lovely-eyed one, no man,
no gandharva or yakṣa equals me.

38 Go, gracious girl. Or stay.
As you please. Do what you like.
Best of all, bewitching bodied lady,
send your man-eating brother to me."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 Because she delayed returning,
the *īśvara*-among rākṣasas Hiḍimba
climbed down from his tree
and hurried to the Pāṇḍavas.

2 Red eyes.
Strong arms.
Uplifted locks.
Huge mouth.
Cloud-skinned.
Sharp-toothed.
Fearsome.

3 Hiḍimba saw her fierce brother
alight from the tree
and, alarmed, turned to Bhīma
and said:

4 "He is coming.
My wicked man-eating rākṣasa
He is raging with anger.
Do as I tell you.

5 Brave one, I am a rākṣasī, I am strong,
I can go wherever I want to
Sit on my shoulders,
fly with me to the sky.

6 O great foe-subduer,
wake your mother and brothers,
I will take them all
and escape to the sky."

7 "Lovely-hipped lady," said Bhīma,
"as long as I am here,
no rākṣasa can harm us.
Slim-waisted one, I will kill him.

8 Gentle girl, this fierce rākṣasa
is no match for me.
All the world's rākṣasas
cannot match my strength.

9 Look at my arms –
like an elephant's trunk!
Look at my thighs –
like two iron clubs!
And my chest –
broad, hard as rock!

10 Today, O beautiful one,
you will see me like Indra.
Large-hipped lady, because I am a human,
do not think me weak."

11 "You are like a god," she replied,
"O tiger-among-men, I do not think you weak.
But I have seen and I know
the power of rākṣasas over men."

12 O descendant of Bharata, Janamejaya,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the infuriated cannibal rākṣasa heard
his sister and Bhīma talking.

13 He saw Hiḍimbā in the shape
of a young girl, flower-
garlands in her hair, her face
radiant like the full moon;

14 Her eyebrows, eyes, nose,
her ringlets rivalling comparison,
her soft-coloured nails and complexion;
she was wearing a transparent dress.

15 So gorgeously was she dressed,
    that he immediately concluded
she lusted for some human –
    and he flared up in anger.

16 O best among the Kauravas, Janamejaya,
    so fierce was his anger
that, his eyeballs rolling,
    he shouted at his sister.

17 "Fool girl!
Who thwarts
My hunger?
Hiḍimbā,
Are you mad?
Don't you
Fear me?

18 Filthy woman!
Shame on you!
Your lust
Shames me . . .
You wrong
Your ancestors,
All the Indra-
among-rākṣasas . . .

19 I'll kill you!
I'll kill all
For whose sake
You do
This heinous
Crime!"

20 Saying this, he rushed at Hiḍimba,
    red eyes flashing,
teeth clenched tightly,
    as if to kill her.

21 Bhīma, finest of weapon-
wielders, saw him rush
forward, and intervened,
shouting "Stop! Stop!"

22 Bhīma was amused seeing
the red-eyed rākṣasa
rush at his sister,
and he said:

23 "Hiḍimba, don't wake
these peacefully sleeping men.
Wicked man-eater, let me see
you first tackle me.

24 Take me on first, instead
of hitting a woman –
especially one who's done no wrong.
She is the wronged one.

25 In desiring me, she is not
in control of herself.
The god of love grips her –
coursing through her body.

26 Why, you rascally rākṣasa!
Your sister came to me
to do your bidding, didn't she?
But when she saw me, so handsome,

27 Desire possessed her. What harm
has she done? Why not
blame the god of love instead?
Why should you strike *her*?

28 You scoundrel, how dare you
strike a woman in my presence?
Come, cannibal, fight with me –
singly – if you must.

29 And I swear this – today alone
I'll fight you and despatch
you to the land of Yama.
I'll crush your head
into little fragments, O rākşasa,
with my own hands,

30 As if an elephant's foot
had smashed it. When you die,
hawks, vultures and jackals
will search and feast on you,

31 Gloating on each morsel.
In no time at all,
I will rid this forest
of all defiling rākşasa.

32 And your sister will see me
today, drag your corpse,
hill-huge though it is,
like a lion dragging a huge elephant.

33 With swinish rascals like you
gone, killed by my hands,
travellers will enter this forest
and live in it without fear."

34 "Boasting
Mortal!"
Shouted Hiḍimba
"Hurry up.
Fight!
Boast
Later.

35 Think
You are
Strong? –
Find out
Today –
However strong
You are,
I am stronger.

36 I will
Kill
First you,
Then
Your brothers.
Let them
Sleep.
Fool! Foul-mouthed one!
Come,
Be killed!

37 I will
Drink
Your blood.
Then
I will
Kill
Them
And
My sister."

38 With these words, the man-eater
raised his arms, and fiercely
lunged at the great
foe-subduer Bhīma.

39 Bhīma seized the arms
of the cannibal Hiḍimba,
smiling as he did so
(continued Vaiśampāyana),

40 The rākṣasa struggled,
but Bhīma violently dragged him
eight bowlengths away,
like a lion dragging a deer.

41 The rākṣasa, infuriated,
clutched at Pāṇḍava Bhīma's legs,
emitting agonised noises
all the while

42 But Bhīma continued dragging him
with all his strength,
because he did not want
his sleeping brothers disturbed.

43 They fell on each other,
grappling with fierce force.
They were both giants of strength,
Bhīma and Hiḍimba.

44 They fought like two massive,
rutting elephants, in their anger
toppling trees and trampling
the surrounding vines and creepers.

45 The tremendous din woke up
the Pāṇḍavas and their mother,
and they saw sitting before them –
the rākṣasī Hiḍimbā.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

1 The lions-among-men Pāṇḍavas and their mother
opened their eyes and were struck
with astonishment seeing
the supra-human beauty of Hiḍimbā

2 Kuntī, still marvelling
at Hiḍimbā's loveliness,
said to her sweetly and gently
these gracious words:

3 "O girl with goddess-like beauty!
Who are you and whose?
Why have you come here,
and from where have you come?

4 Are you a forest-goddess
or an apsarā?
Tell me – and tell me
why you are sitting here."

5 "That cloud-blue-mahā-forest you see
not so far away,"
replied Hiḍimbā, "is where I live
with the rākṣasa Hiḍimbā.

6 Sweet lady, I am his sister,
Hiḍimbā's sister. He sent me,
noble lady, to kill you
and your sleeping sons.

7 I came here obeying
his cruel command, and I saw
your mahā-strong son whose skin
is the colour of new gold.

8 And the god of love
Manmatha, who rules
all creatures, brought me
under your son's spell.

9 I decided then and there
to make your mahā-strong son my husband,
and leave this place,
but I failed.

10 Because I delayed,
my cannibal brother came
in person with the intention
of killing all your sons.

11 But your brave mahā-ātmaned son
(whom I chose as husband)
dragged him away from the spot
by brute force.

12 There they are – the man
and the rākṣasa, locked
in mahā-duel, shouting and roaring
as they grapple with each other."

13 She finished – and Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva
scrambled to their feet
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

14 They saw the two engaged
in mortal duel – dragging
each other like two mighty lions,
both eager to win.

15 The grappled with each other –
they dashed against each other.
Smoke-dust rose from the ground,
as if from a forest fire.

16 Dust-covered, the two hill-huge heroes
appeared to the Pāṇḍavas
like two huge cliffs
enveloped in mist.

17 Seeing Bhīma hard pressed
by the giant rākṣasa,
Pārtha-Arjuna, smiling a little,
said slowly:

18 "Bhīma, mahā-muscled brother, don't fear!
We had no idea
how tired you were
in this fight with the rākṣasa,

19 Here I am, Pṛthā's son Arjuna,
ready to help you.
I'll kill the rākṣasa while the twins
guard our mother."

20 "Watch me fight!" said Bhīma,
"And don't interfere!
Once I lay my hands on him,
he won't escape."

21 "Get rid of this evil rākṣasa quickly,
O foe-crusher," shouted Arjuna.
"We must leave here immediately –
not a moment to waste, Bhīma.

22 Look at the pink in the east –
it's false dawn; at *rudra muhūrta,*
the first light of dawn, they say
rākṣasas are most powerful.

23 Bhīma, hurry. Don't play games
with him. Finish him off!
Get to work on him. Who knows
what tricks of māyā he'll be up to?"

24 Bhīma, encouraged, exploded
in anger. He summoned
all the energy that Vāyu the wind-god
summons at the time of world-dissolution.

25 He lifted up the cloud-dark rākṣasa
above his head;
and roaring in anger, swung him
around a hundred times.

26 "Useless eater of useless flesh!
Uselessly old!
Useless-minded!
Deserver of a useless death!
Be useless today
for ever and ever!

27 I'll free the forest
of your unholy presence,
your deadly thorn; no more
will you eat humans here."

28 "If you need help," said Arjuna,
"shout and let me know.
I'll finish him off for you.
Kill him! We must hurry.

29 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
why not let *me* do the job?
You are tired – you've done
your best – you need rest."

30 Bhīma's anger exploded again
on hearing Arjuna's words.
He dashed the rākṣasa on the ground,
and killed him as he would an animal.

31 Before he died, the rākṣasa let loose
a piercing, horrible roar,
like that of a wet drum,
that deafened the forest.

32 Mahā-muscled Bhīma, Pāṇḍū's son,
held the body on his knee,
and broke it in two.
The Pāṇḍavas applauded.

33 Hiḍimba's death pleased them
immensely. They were quick
in congratulating Bhīma,
the foe-crusher, the tiger-among-men.

34 Arjuna gave mahā-ātmaned Bhīma
special praise; after which,
Arjuna said to wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma:

35 "There's a town not far from here.
So I guess. Noble one,
let's hurry and go there,
and evade Suyodhana-Duryodhana's pursuit."

36 The mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas agreed,
and, with their mother,
the tigers-among-men left.
The rākṣasī Hiḍimba followed.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

1 After a while, Hiḍimba
came up and, without a word,
the sister of the dead rākṣasa
revered Kuntī

2 And Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira. Respectfully,
she approached
the great foe-crusher, mighty Bhīma,
and said:

3 "I saw you,
and Manmatha, the god of love,
took hold of my heart.
I disobeyed my brother

4 For your sake. I saw him
die a terrible death
at your hands. I have only
one wish – to serve you."

5 Bhīma replied, "Rākṣasas have long memories;
they are known to take revenge
by means of māyā. Go away!
Take the path of your brother!"

6 "Tiger-among-men Bhīma,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira, "even in anger
one doesn't strike a woman. Higher
than personal safety is practice of dharma.

7 The mahā-powerful rākṣasa
came to kill us – and you killed him.
She's only his sister – only a woman –
her anger cannot harm us."

8 Hiḍimba stepped forward
and respectfully, with joined palms
doing añjali before Kuntī
and Yudhiṣṭhira, said to Kuntī:

9 "Noble lady, you know the pangs
of love that women can suffer.
Your son Bhīma, lovely lady,
has made me suffer so.

10 I suffered, I suffered, and I waited.
I waited for the time
when my happiness would come.
That time has now come.

11 Gracious lady, I have left
my dharma, my family, my friends,
because I want your son,
that finest of men, to be my husband.

12 If now, O most beautiful lady,
you deny me, and he
rejects me, I promise you –
I will not live any more.

13 Lady of exquisite beauty,
be kind to me.
I know I am very foolish,
but let me your bhaktā.

14 Make me one with your god-like son,
O mahā-fortune-favoured lady.
Let him go with me
wherever I take him. I promise
to return him to you safely.

15 Whenever you think of me,
I will come to serve you.
Depend on me to transport you
over the roughest terrain.

16 If you desire speedy passage,
I'll carry you on my back.
Be kind to me.
Make Bhīma accept me.

17 I am not a Yātudhānī evil spirit
nor a night-prowler.
O rānī, I happen to be a rākṣasī-girl
named Salakaṭaṅkaṭī.

18 I am young,
I am goddess-like.
Give me Bhīma, and I promise,
keeping him as my ideal,
to serve you faithfully.

19 One's life should be protected
at all costs – this is dharma.
Any means may be used
to protect one's life.

20 Whoever follows dharma in a crisis
is the finest knower of dharma.
The greatest crisis is to waver
when dharma needs to be followed.

21 Virtue sustains life,
therefore virtue is called the 'life-giver'.
No means can be condemned
that leads to success in dharma.

22 I am an unfortunate woman,
lost in love. Help me.
Good people assist in the attainment
of dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa.

23 Good men are kind. What greater
dharma is there than compassion?
My supernatural gift gives me power
to summon ghosts and see the future.

24 So what I tell you
is for your welfare. A small distance
from here is a lake.
Go there, bathe in its waters,

25 And rest for a while,
under a tree. After some days,
lotus petal-eyed Vyāsa will appear to you
and free you from your troubles.

26 He knows by inner vision
how Duryodhana drove you
out from Hastināpura,
how you were tricked
into the fire-trap in Vāraṇāvata,
how Vidura rescued you.

27 He is staying at the āśrama
of ṛṣi Śālihotra, āśrama
where heat and cold do not affect
the sacred trees,

28 Where one can live happily
by drinking plain water.
The trees and lake of that āśrama
are creations of Śālihotra's tapasyā,

29 And everywhere birds of all kinds –
kadambas, cranes,
swans, *kurarīs* and *kuraras* –
sing melodiously all day long."

30 Kuntī heard; and turning to Yudhiṣṭhira,
who was deeply learned
in all the sacred texts,
she said:

31 "O finest of all who are learned in dharma!
Listen to what I say.
What this rākṣasī says
seems to agree with dharma.

32 True, she may have a hidden
hostility for Bhīma – but what harm
can she do? If you agree, I will let her live
with Bhīma for some time."

33 Yudhiṣṭhira said to Hiḍimbā:
"All that you say is true.
Nonetheless, slim-waisted beauty, Hiḍimbā,
you must do as I say.

34 Sweet lady! After Bhīmasena finishes his morning
ablutions, and performs his prayers
and other rituals, you will please him
till the sun sets.

35 O mind-swift enchantress,
enjoy the day with him,
but never forget to bring him
back to us before night falls.

36 Punctually, before evening-saṁdhyā
every day, return him to us.
Enjoy Bhīma till such time
as life quickens in your womb.

37 This is an absolute condition.
Serve Bhīma well, lovely girl;
please him every way you can;
never forget this."

38 After Yudhiṣṭhira finished,
Kunti embraced Hiḍimbā:
Hiḍimbā moved away from Yudhiṣṭhira
and went near Bhīma.

39 She walked between Bhima and Arjuna;
Nakula and Sahadeva walked ahead.
They came to the lovely lake
near Śālihotra āśrama.

40 Here Hiḍimbā made made the pledge
required by Kuntī and Yudhiṣṭhira.
Under a shady tree she constructed
a dwelling for the Pāṇḍavas

41 Making them comfortable,
she constructed, a little distance off,
a small hut
for Kuntī and herself.

42 The Pāṇḍavas bathed,
said their saṁdhyā prayers, and,
though famished and thirsty,
subsisted only on water.

43 Ṛṣi Sālīhotra, seeing them
hungry, mentally produced
large quantities of food and drink
for their satisfaction.

44 Pāṇḍavas rested; later,
they discussed the various incidents –
the burning of the house of lac,
the encounter with Hiḍimbā.

45 And so on. Discussion over,
Kuntī turned to Bhīma,
Pāṇḍū's mighty-armed son,
and said:

46 "My son, as Pāṇḍu was once
to you, so now is Yudhiṣṭhira.
Dharma lays down that
his words are as respectworthy.

47 For Pāṇḍu's sake, my son *yuvarāja*,
do as I now tell you.
I can see no way
of taking fit revenge
for the wicked deeds
that Duryodhana has done us.

48 A grave problem of dharma faces us.
O mahā-learned Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
you know Hiḍimbā loves you,
and has approached Yudhiṣṭhira
declaring her love for you.
She says it is her dharma.

49 Have a son by her. It is dharma.
I wish it. He will work
for our welfare. My son,
I do not want a no
from you. I want your promise
now, in front of both of us."

50 "Whatever you say," replied Bhīma,
and turning to Hiḍimbā,
he said, "Rākṣasī, listen carefully
to the terms of my agreement –

51 Slender-waisted beauty,
I will go where you take me
and live with you until such time
as a son is born."

52 "I agree," said Hiḍimbā,
and lifting Bhīma
on her shoulders, she sped
swiftly into the sky.

53 She assumed the loveliest
of lovely shapes, ornaments
glittered on her person,
she sang the sweetest of songs,

54 And sported amorously
with Bhīma on enchanting hill tops,
god-sanctified, echoing to bird-song,
filled with animals,

55 And in forests and mountain-
caves, where flowering trees
shed fragrance, and near lakes,
lovely with lotus and lily,

56 And on river-islands, beside
translucent pebbled streams,
beside moss-grown banks
of forest-streams and hill-streams,

57 In woods filled with breathtaking
beauty of blossoming branches,
in secluded Himalayan retreats,
in tucked-away mountain hide-outs,

58 In the pellucid waters
of lotus-smiling inland lakes,
on the golden and pearly
shores of distant seas,

59 In beautiful cities
and entrancing gardens, in woods
sanctified by the gods,
on the breasts of high hills,

60 In the lands of the Guhyakas,
in the āśramas of ṛṣis,
on the banks of Lake Mānasarovara
rich with perennial fruit and flower.

61 She assumed exquisite beauty
when she sported with Bhīma.
Mind-swift lady of loveliness,
she sported in all these places.

62 A mahā-son was born to her –
a fierce-eyed, large-mouthed baby
with ears like arrows
and a fear-instilling face,

63 A roaring voice,
brown lips, sharp teeth.
He was powerful and athletic,
like a chariot-hero,

64 He had a long nose,
broad, swelling chest,
calves rippling with muscles,
and amazing swiftness of speed –

65 Born of human, he was
more than human
he excelled the piśācas
and amazing swiftness of speed –

66 He was hardly ever a boy,
he looked so full-grown;
and very soon he became renowned
as an expert arms-wielder.

67 Rākṣasa women conceive
and deliver simultaneously;
they can assume and change
any form at will.

68 That magnificent-looking,
mighty bowman of a son,
soon after his birth,
touched his parents' feet. They named him

69 Ghaṭotkaca,
because his mother said,
"His head is shaped
like a *ghaṭa* water-pot."

70 Ghaṭotkaca was deeply attached
to the Pāṇḍavas,
and they became very fond of him.
He obeyed all their commands.

71 Knowing that her stay with Bhīma
was over, Hiḍimbā went away
to a place of her choosing
after promising the Pāṇḍavas to return.

72 Mahā-bodied Ghaṭotkaca offered the Pāṇḍavas
his reverence,
and said:
"Defectless elders,

73 Tell me without hesitation
what I should do for you."
Kuntī replied
to the son of Bhīma:

74 "You are one of us Kauravas.
To me you are like Bhīma himself.
You are the eldest of the five Pāṇḍavas
Therefore, you should help them."

75 Ghaṭotkaca praṇāma-ed her,
and said, "Like Rāvaṇa
and Indrajit, famed for their
mahā-prowess, am I famed
for massive size and prowess;
in fact, I am stronger.

76 Whenever you need me,
I will come to serve you."
With these words, Ghaṭotkaca
sped away to the north.

77 Ghaṭotkaca was a creation of Indra;
he was the mahā-chariot-hero match
for mahā-ātmaned Karṇa,
possessor of the śakti-missile.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

1 The Pāṇḍavas, mahā-chariot-heroes,
roamed from forest to forest
killing many beasts. In the course
of their travels they passed through

2 The kingdoms of the Matsyas,
the Tigartes, the Pāñcālas
and the Kīcakas, where they saw
enchanting woods and lakes.

3 Their hair was now matted,
and they wore bark and skin dresses.
Anyone seeing them and their mother
would think they were ascetics.

4 Sometimes the mahā-chariot-heroes hurried,
sometimes they slowed down;
because their mother accompanied them,
they varied their pace.

5 They studied the Upaniṣads,
the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
and other śāstras. One day,
they came across Pitamāha-Vyāsa.

6 The mahā-ātmaned subduers-of-enemies
respectfully greeted Vyāsa,
and, accompanied by their mother,
stood before him with palms joined in añjali.

7 Vyāsa said:
Bull-brave Bharatas, I knew
long before of your tribulations,
after your adharma-treatment
at the hands of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

8 And I have come to you
in the hope of helping you.
Do not be afraid.
Everything will work out well.

9 It is true that you and they
are both the same to me;
but those who are young and suffer
naturally get more sympathy.

10 My affection for you
has never been greater.
Because I love you,
I seek your welfare. Listen.

11 Not far from here is a town
where you will be safe.
Live there, disguised.
Wait for me there."

12 Satyavatī's son Vyāsa
comforted the Pāṇḍavas,
and guided them to Ekacakra.
He said to Kuntī:

13 "My daughter with living sons!
Your son Yudhiṣṭhira,
a mahātmā bull-brave hero,
always dedicated to dharma,
will rule over the earth's kings.

14 With the help of the strength
of Bhīma and Arjuna,
he will rule the entire
sea-girdled world.

15 Your sons and Mādrī's sons,
all of the mahā-chariot-heroes,
will delight in their kingdom,
ruling with full power.

16 When the whole world is conquered,
these tigers-among-men will perform the yajñas
of Rājasūya and Aśvamedha,
offering vast sums of dakṣiṇā.

17 Their relatives and friends
will prosper with them.
Your sons will restore
the glory of their forefathers."

18 With these words, he escorted them
to the house of a Brahmin;
there the finest-of-ṛṣis Dvaipāyana Vyāsa
said to the eldest Pāṇḍava:

19 "Wait for me here a month.
I shall return.
Success attends the man
who adapts to time and place."

20 O lord of men, the Pāṇḍavas
with palms folded in añjali said,
"So be it." And the ṛṣi Vyāsa bhagavān
went back to where he came from.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

1 Janamejaya asked:
"Finest of the twice-born,
what did the sons of Kuntī,
all mahā-chariot-warriors,
do in Ekacakra?"

2 Vaiśampāyana replied:
In Ekacakra,
the sons of Pāṇḍu,
all mahā-chariot-warriors,
stayed briefly in the Brahmin's house.

3 There, they passed
their time roaming
from lovely lake to lake,
from river to river,

4 Subsisting on alms, O lord of the earth.
So wonderful were their feats,
in no time they became
favourites of the people.

5 Whatever food they received
they offered to Kuntī
each night, and Kuntī in turn
decided each Pāṇḍava's share.

6 Of these great foe-chastisers,
four (and Kuntī) shared
half the food; the other half
was eaten by mahā-powerful Bhīma.

7 In this way, O bull-brave Janamejaya,
the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas
spent a few days
in Ekacakra.

8 One day, when the others
had gone alms-begging,
Bhīma and Kuntī
were alone in the house.

9 Kuntī heard loud cries
of agonised lamentation
coming from a corner
of the Brahmin's house.

10 She was touched, O rājā,
being loving and compassionate.
The woeful cries
stirred her deeply.

11 So intense was her heartfelt grief
that she turned to Bhīma
and said to him these words
of loving-kindness:

12 "My son, safe from Duryodhana,
we found happy refuge
in this Brahmin's house.
We forgot our sorrows.

13 For which reason, my son,
I always think of his welfare.
That is the least a grateful guest
can do for his kind host.

14 *Tātā*, dear son; to return goodness for goodness–
isn't this to be a man?
Such an action prospers.
Even better to return more goodness.

15 I can see there is suffering
in this Brahmin's house.
This is our chance to be
of some help to him."

16 "Find from him
why he's suffering," replied Bhīma.
"No matter how difficult,
I will then give him help."

17 While they were talking, O lord of the earth,
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
they heard more piercing wails
from the Brahmin and his wife.

18 Like a cow
running
to her tethered calf, Kuntī hurried
to the Brahmin's inner room.

19 She saw: the Brahmin,
his wife, son, and daughter,
sitting disconsolate,
moaning their lot.

20 The Brahmin said:
"Shame on this life!
Hollow as a reed
is life!
Root of all suffering!
We are slaves
of others,
victims
of misfortune!

21 To live
is to suffer,
To live
is to spawn
diseases.
Life
is a series
of sorrows.

22 They say the ātman
is one;
split in three,
chasing
dharma, artha, kāma,
Not getting them, it suffers –
How it suffers!

23 They say mokṣa
is man's goal –
but who gets mokṣa? –
most chase artha –
and get hell instead.

24 To want artha
is to suffer;
To get it,
is to suffer more.
If artha comes,
greed grows;
If artha goes,
sorrow comes.

25 I can't think
of any way
of escaping from here
with my wife and son.

26 Remember, Brahminī,
I told you so!
I told you to leave this place,
and you wouldn't listen!

27 You foolish woman!
I told you then,
and all you could say
was: *I was born here,*
I grew up here,
my father lived here.

28 Your father is dead.
    Your old mother died long ago.
Your friends, your relatives
    are all dead.
What pleasure do you get
    in staying on here?

29 Because you had such affection
    for your friends and relatives,
you refused to listen to me.
    Now I have to learn
how to endure the loss
    of friends and relatives.

30 How? How?
    It will kill me!
How can I live,
    with friends and relatives gone?

31 In my deeds of dharma,
    you stood by my side;
you were like a mother to me;
    the gods gave you to me
as a loved-and-loving friend, a sakhī;
    you have been my sole strength.

32 My father and mother chose you
    as my partner through life;
I married you
    to the chanting of sacred mantras.

33 You are noble-born, sweet-tempered,
    you are the mother
of my children; innocent,
    faithful, devoted to me;
you accepted and married me
    with all the religious rites;

34 How can I sacrifice you
simply to save myself?
How can I sacrifice my son
simply to save myself?

35 He is so young – not a hair
yet on his chin.
How can I sacrifice my daughter,
the child of my loins,

36 Given to me by the Creator
to bestow on a husband,
through whom I will enjoy,
as will my ancestors,
the heaven reserved for those
whose daughters have sons?

37 Some men think a father
loves his son more,
others think his daughter.
I love both equally.

38 How can I sacrifice my innocent
little daughter, who continues
my family line and on whom
depends my heavenly bliss?

39 I cannot even sacrifice myself,
for if I go to the other world,
who will look after my children,
so dependent on me?

40 To sacrifice either of them
would be cruel and wrong;
to sacrifice myself is also
to ensure their doom.

41 Aho! What torture!
What should I do?
How deal with friends and relatives?
Let me die along with them.
Life now is pointless."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

1 His wife the Brahmini said:
“Is this
a time to mourn?
You are learned, you should not grieve
like an ordinary man.

2 All men must die.
Is there any point
in grieving
over the inevitable?

3 A man is naturally attached
to wife, son and daughter.
You are wise. Do not mourn.
Let me go in your place.

4 This is a wife’s
highest and eternal duty –
to dedicate her life
to the welfare of her husband.

5 To do so will give me
pleasure now; it will
win me renown in this world,
and undying joy in the next.

6 What I have just described
is the highest form
of dharma: there is no
finer artha, no finer dharma.

7 I have already fulfilled
a wife’s duty – by giving you
a son and daughter. I am free
of my debt to you.

8 You will be able
 to support and protect the children.
It is not possible for me
 to support and protect them.

9 My lord, my life, my wealth!
 If you leave us,
how will we ever be able
 to survive?

10 A widow, without her lord,
 with two small children to look after,
how will I be able
 to lead a virtuous life?

11 How will I protect my girl
 if selfish and characterless men
come with proposals –
 and you not with us?

12 Like birds scavenging
 for a scrap of meat thrown
on the ground, men seek a woman
 who has lost her husband.

13 Who knows, O finest of the twice-born?
 If wicked men seek me
constantly, I might stray
 from the straight path.

14 As for our innocent daughter –
 your little girl –
how will I be able to guide her
 on the path of our ancestral values?

15 How will I teach our son
 such gunas and such dharma
as were yours, so that he gives me help
 when I am in need?

16 Seeing me helpless,
I know that undeserving men
will solicit my daughter,
like Śūdras seeking the Vedas.

17 If I do not give her
in marriage – our talented daughter,
your lovely girl – who knows,
they may take her away,
like crows stealing
the sacred ghee of a yajña.

18 If your son grows to be
unlike you, if your daughter
comes under the influence
of an unworthy man,

19 Do you think I could bear it?
I would rather be an outcaste.
What will be my fate?
I would much rather die.

20 These little children of ours,
with you and me gone,
will wither away and die
like fish in a dried-up pond.

21 Take my word for it –
without you all three of us
will die. Which is why I say:
let me be the one.

22 O Brahmin, persons learned in dharma say
for a wife with children
to die before her husband does,
is the greatest goal.

23 A father gives little.
A mother gives little.
A son gives little.
A husband is the all-giver.
Who will not cherish a husband?

24 For you I am giving up
my son,
my daughter, my relatives,
my life.

25 To serve her husband
is more important to a wife
than yajñas and tapasyā,
rituals and alms-giving.

26 What I intend doing
is therefore the highest dharma:
it is meant for your good
and for the good of our *kula*, our family.

27 Those who know dharma say:
wealth, relatives, children, wives,
are loved because they save one.
when there's a crisis of dharma.

28 Cherish wealth in a crisis.
Cherish a wife with wealth.
Cherish both wife and wealth
for the sake of your ātman,
to protect yourself.

29 Wise men say: A wife,
a son, a house, and money,
are all acquired to provide
against expected or unexpected trouble.

30 Wise men have also said;
If one's self is weighed
against all one's relatives,
one's ātman will weigh heavier.

31 O my noble husband, my respected husband,
through me achieve your aim.
Sacrifice me, save yourself.
And look after our children.

32 Those who laid down dharma
ruled that women should never be harmed.
The rākṣasas also know dharma.
He won't dare kill me.

33 He will kill a man, but I do not think
he will harm a woman
O learned-in-dharma husband,
send me to him.

34 Many happy times
have I spent with you,
many surpassing sweet days
have we together known.
Much dharma have we
practised together.
You have given me two lovely children.
Death holds no fears for me.

35 I have borne children,
and now I am getting old.
All I wish is your welfare.
Therefore I have decided on this.

36 Send me away, noble husband,
and find another woman,
and re-practise dharma with her
as you did with me.

37 To marry again and again is not
morally condemnable in a man;
for a woman to take a second husband
is mahā-adharma.

38 Think on this.
Know that to sacrifice yourself
is improper. Save yourself,
your children, your family, now!"

39 O Bhārata-descendant Janamejaya!
(ended Vaiśampāyana)
The Brahmin heard his wife
say this.

40 Deeply troubled, he embraced her.
Tears trickled down
the cheeks
of both husband and wife.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

1 When she heard her parents
lament like this,
the daughter, grief-stricken, said
(continued Vaiśampāyana):

2 "Why are you weeping,
as if you have no one
in the world? Listen to me.
Then do what is proper.

3 One day you will give me away.
Dharma ordains it.
Give me away now,
and save the family.

4 After all, children are sought
because they are saviours.
Let me save you. Cross this sea
of sorrow with me as raft.

5 A child saves his parents
in this world and the next,
so a child by the wise is called *putra*,
one-who-saves-from-the-hell-called-*put*.

6 My pitṛs hope that
I should bear them a saviour son;
instead, I will save them
by saving my father's life.

7 My brother, as you know,
is very young; if you die,
I know he will die too
soon after your death.

8 Father, should you die,
    and he dies too, the *piṇḍa*-homage
to our ancestors will stop.
    They will be deeply displeased.

9 Without father, mother, brother,
    I will fall from one sorrow
into another, until I will not be able
    to bear any more earthly pain.

10 On the other hand, if you,
    mother, and my baby brother
save yourselves, the *piṇḍa*-
    offering is assured.

11 A son is like one's own self,
    a wife is like a friend,
a loved-and-loving-sakhā,
    a daughter an irritation, an inconvenience.
Remove the irritation.
    Let me do my dharma.

12 *Tāta*, dear father, I am only a girl.
    If you leave me alone,
what will I do except,
    helpless, wander aimlessly?

13 Instead, give me this chance
    to save my family
by doing something difficult to do.
    Let my death give meaning to my life.

14 O noblest of the twice-born,
    if you go, leaving me behind,
I'll be distraught.
    Think of me, please!

15 I am the one-to-be-given-away,
so give me away.
For the sake of dharma, for our sake,
for the family's sake, do this.

16 Don't delay. What must be done
should be quickly done.
Could there be anything more painful
than your leaving us?

17 If you do, we'll have to go about
begging for food, like dogs.
If you live, on the other hand,
I shall live happily in heaven

18 I have heard that gods and pitṛs
do not approve of such a sacrifices,
but your oblations to the gods and pitṛs
will surely earn their favours."

19 When they heard her lament
like this (Vaiśampāyana said),
father, brother and daughter
began sobbing uncontrollably together.

20 The little son, his young eyes
suddenly expanding
with joy, seeing them sobbing,
said childishly:

21 "O father, O mother,
O sister, don't cry!
Don't!" Smiling,
he came near each,

22 And picking up
a dry grassblade,
he shouted joyfully, "I'll kill
the man-eating rākṣasa with this!"

23 They heard the brave words
of the lisping hero,
and they laughed, and wept
simultaneously.

24 Kuntī decided to enter then,
She came
and her words to them
were like amṛta to a dead man.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

1 "Tell me," Kuntī said,
"what is the cause of your grief?
Knowing the cause,
I may be able to help you remove it."

2 "Rich-in-tapasyā lady," replied the Brahmin,
"to speak as you do is kind
of you. But our grief is special –
no human being can remove it.

3 There is a rākṣasa called Baka,
who lives not far from here.
He is the lord of Ekacakra,
he rules this territory.

4 He's an insatiable cannibal,
he's greater than an anti-god;
he is unchallenged ruler here,
he grows fat on human flesh.

5 Ekacakra and the surrounding areas
are protected by him.
Because he guards us,
no enemy dare attack us.

6 We are pledged to feed him
every day – one cartload of rice,
two buffaloes, and the man
who takes the supplies to him.

7 Each house in this town
gets its turn, a terrible day,
after perhaps many years,
when a family has to suffer.

8 If any family avoids
its duty, the rākṣasa
devours all in the house,
including the children.

9 We have a foolish rājā
who lives in a place
called Vetrakīyagṛha –
he knows nothing
of how to govern
and how to protect his subjects.

10 With a worthless king
like that, whose weakness
creates insecurity everywhere,
we deserve what we get.

11 We Brahmins are free men –
no one can give us advice.
We are self-sufficient,
we roam as free as birds.

12 Brahmins seek first a good king,
then a wife and wealth,
and use king, wife and wealth
to protect sons and relatives.

13 But it's the other way round
with me. That's the reason
I grieve – that's why I am
so sorely afflicted.

14 This time it's my turn –
the family-destroying day
has come – I must supply food
and a human to the rākṣasa

15 I have no money
to buy a substitute man.
And I can't bring myself
to send someone dear to me.

16 I can see no way out
of the rākṣasa's clutches.
This is the ocean of grief
in which I am drowning.

17 I have decided to go
with my family to the rākṣasa;
today that monster can devour
us all if he wishes."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

1 "Do not be alarmed,"
said Kuntī. "I think
I see a way of rescuing you
from this rākṣasa.

2 You have one young son,
you have one virgin daughter;
I do not like that they,
or you and your wife should die.

3 I have five sons.
I will so arrange that one son
will meet the rākṣasa
with the food-supplies."

4 "No," replied the Brahmin,
"this cannot be. I will not
save my life at the expense
of a Brahmin's or a guest's.

5 Even the low-born and those without dharma
will refuse your offer.
Better to sacrifice oneself
and one's own children for a Brahmin.

6 I believe in this,
and I will not swerve.
Between a Brahmin's death or my own,
I'll choose my own.

7 To kill a Brahmin is a crime
without expiation.
Better that I go, though against my wishes,
than endanger a Brahmin.

8 Good lady, if I go,
I at best sacrifice myself,
I don't commit the crime of suicide –
the crime is his who kills me.

9 But if I knowingly send another,
a Brahmin, it is like murder.
From such a cruel deed,
how will I ever escape?

10 Haven't the learned said:
Abandoning a guest, one who seeks
your protection, and killing one
who begs for mercy are vicious deeds?

11 The mahātmās who know all
about behaviour in times of crisis,
have explained that no man
should indulge in cruel condemnable deeds.

12 So let me die today.
Let me and my wife perish.
I will not be responsible
for the killing of a Brahmin."

13 "Brahmin," said Kuntī,
"I respect Brahmins. Listen.
If I had a hundred sons,
all would be equally dear to me.

14 But I know this rākṣasa
will never be able to harm
my son, who is strong
and supple, and knows the mantras.

15 He'll take the food
to the rākṣasa, but I know
he won't be harmed.
I'm convinced of this.

16 I have seen many rākṣasas,
huge, powerful creatures,
fall victim to my son.
He killed them all.

17 But I must ask you, O Brahmin,
to keep this a secret –
for if people get to know,
they'll become curious and envious.

18 It's like this – wise men have said
if my son discloses his powers
without his guru's permission,
he'll lose them."

19 The Brahmin and his wife
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
heard these amṛta-like words
of Kuntī, and rejoiced.

20 Kuntī and Brahmin
approached Bhīma, the son
of the wind-god, saying, "Do this."
And he said, "I will."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

1 Great Bhārata-Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana
continued), some time after Bhīma said,
"I will", all the Pāṇḍavas
arrived there, bringing alms-food.

2 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
guessed by Bhīma's looks
that something was amiss,
and said privately to his mother:

3 "What is troubling dreadful-deed-doing
Bhīma? Is he planning something
on his own, or have you
ordered him to do it?"

4 Kuntī replied: "I have asked
my great foe-subduing son
to save the Brahmin
and save the town too."

5 "But don't you think it rash?"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"I've never heard wise men
recommend risking one's son.

6 Why do you have to risk your son
to save another's?
You have done something advised
neither by commonsense nor the Vedas.

7 The man whose great strength
assures us peaceful sleep,
the man with whose help we hope
to recover our kingdom;

8 The man whose very name
  makes Śakuni and Duryodhana
and their followers nervous,
  robbing them of sleep;

9 The man whose heroic strength
  brought us out
of the flaming lacquer-house;
  the man who killed vicious Purocana;

10 The man who gives us
  confidence that one day we will rule
the world's wealth
  after killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra –

11 What right had you
  to expose him like this?
Have you lost your reason?
  Have our suffering unbalanced you?"

12 "Yudhiṣṭhira," replied Kuntī,
  "don't get upset over Vṛkodara-Bhīma.
No, I have not lost my head.
  I know what I am doing.

13 My son, this good Brahmin
  gave us shelter in his house,
he gave us respect, and hid us
  from Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

14 I have done what I have done, Paṛtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
  in order to pay him back
for his kindness.
  It is human never to forget kindness.

15 To return kindness with even
  more kindness, is the right thing to do.
I noticed Vṛkodara-Bhīma's prowess
  in the lacquer-house,

16 And when he killed Hiḍimba;
I have full faith in him.
Why, Bhīma's arms have the strength
of ten thousand elephants.

17 Or how could he have carried
his elephant-heavy brothers
from Vāraṇāvata? Bhīma is so strong
he can even defeat thunder-wielding Indra.

18 Immediately after birth,
he fell from my lap.
The stone-slab he fell on
shattered under his weight.

19 From that day, O son of Pāṇḍu,
I knew how strong he was.
It is for this reason I chose Bhīma
to repay the Brahmin.

20 I'm not foolish; don't think me ignorant;
I'm not being selfish.
I know exactly what I am doing.
This is an act of dharma.

21 Yudhiṣṭhira, two benefits
will follow from this act –
one, we'll repay a Brahmin,
two, we'll gain mahā-dharma.

22 If you ask me, I would say
that a Ksatriya who helps a Brahmin
gets the highest heaven
in his after-life.

23 A Kṣatriya who saves
the life of another Kṣatriya
gets great fame both
in this world and the next.

24 And a Kṣatriya who helps
a Vaiśya, in my opinion,
achieves great popularity
on this earth.

25 It's a rājā's duty to protect
even the śūdra if the Śūdra
seeks protection. Then, his deed
gives him rebirth in rich rājā-respected families.

26 Descendant of the Puru dynasty!
Long ago insight-possessing
Bhagavān Vyāsa told me to do this.
That is another reason."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

1 "Mātā," replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"your compassion for the Brahmin
moved you do what you have done
It is noble of you.

2 Because your compassion
for the Brahmin is so strong,
I am convinced Bhīma will kill
the cannibal rākṣasa and return.

3 But the Brahmin must promise
not to say a word of all this
to any of the citizens.
Get his firm word on this."

4 Night passed; and Bhīma,
taking the food with him,
made ready to go to the hide-out
of the man-eating rākṣasa.

5 Reaching the forest
where the rākṣasa lived, Bhīma began
loudly gobbling the food
and shouting for the rākṣasa.

6 Then the rākṣasa,
hearing those words of Bhīma,
rushed in great fury
to where Bhīma was seated.

7 He was mahā-bodied
mahā-swift
fierce
red-eyed
red-bearded
red-haired.
The earth shook as he walked.

8 His mouth
stretched
from ear to ear
His two ears
were like
two *śaṅku*-arrows.
Three lines
furrowed
his forehead.

9 The rākṣasa saw Bhīma
wolfing
the food.
He bit his lips
rolled his eyes
and shouted fiercely:

10 "Fool!
Are you eager to go to Yama,
To the land of the dead –
That you dare eat my food!"

11 Bhima heard,
and smiled;
turned his head, ignoring the rākṣasa,
and went on eating.

12 Yelling horribly,
with arms upraised,
the cannibal rākṣasa rushed
at Bhīma.

13 The foe-conquering son
of Pāṇḍu, Bhīma,
looked once at him,
and went on eating.

14 Inflamed, the rākṣasa
smashed both his hands
heavily down on the back
of Kuntī's son Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

15 Though hit fiercely, with both fists,
Bhīma did not even look up;
instead,
he went on eating.

16 The rākṣasa,
insulted and furious,
uprooted a tree,
and rushed at Bhīma . . .

17 Bhīma, bull-brave human,
mahā-strong Bhīma,
calmly finished his food,
rinsed his mouth, washed his hands,
stood up,
and faced his assailant.

18 Smiling,
he caught
in his left hand
the tree
hurled at him
by the rākṣasa.

19 The rākṣasa,
in quick succession,
uprooted countless trees,
and hurled them
at Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
who hurled them back.

20 Soon, O mahārāja,
the rākṣasa and the human
had stripped
the area of trees.

21 "I am Baka!"
shouted the rākṣasa,
and, in one giant leap,
attacked mahā-powerful Bhīma.

22 Mahā-muscled Bhīma crushed him
to his chest;
then, separating,
started dragging him.

23 Both dragged each other,
as if in turn.
The cannibal slowly
began to tire.

24 The ground shook
under their weights;
huge trees lay
scattered and smashed.

25 Seeing the rākṣasa
weaken, wolf-waisted Vrkodara-
Bhima threw him
on the ground, pressed
his knees on his chest,
and pelted him with blows.

26 Digging one knee
in the crook of his back,
Bhīma gripped his neck
with his right hand,

27 And his lion-cloth
with his left –
and snapped him in two.
The cannibal screamed.

28 Mangled by Bhīma, O lord of the earth,
the rākṣasa
in horrific agony,
vomited blood.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

1 Hill-huge Baka
fearful anti-god,
broken by Bhīma,
died screaming.

2 And his relatives, O rājā Janamejaya,
rushed out from their dwelling
in fear,
when they heard his screams.

3 Powerful Bhīma saw them
afraid and distraught;
he consoled them
and extracted a promise from them

4 "Give up killing men,"
Bhīma made them promise.
"If you don't, I'll kill you
as I killed Baka."

5 O great Bhārata
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
they heard Bhīma's threat,
and promised as ordered.

6 For then on, the inhabitants
of that region noticed
rākṣasas making
friendly and peaceful gestures.

7 Secretly, Bhima placed
the rākṣasa's dead body
near one of the city-gates,
and slipped away, unobserved by anyone.

8 The rākṣasa's relatives,
amazed at Bhīma's awesome strength,
fled terror-stricken
in all directions.

9 Returning to the Brahmin's house,
Bhīma recounted
before rājā Yudhiṣṭhira the manner
of Baka's slaying.

10 Next morning, the city-dwellers,
going out,
saw Baka's blood-spattered corpse
near the city-gate.

11 Horripilating, they stood
and looked
at the hill-huge corpse
of the slaughtered cannibal.

12 O rājā, the news soon spread
throughout Ekacakra,
and the king, accompanied
by thousands of citizens,

13 With their wives, young and old,
hurried to the spot.
Great was their amazement.
They paid homage to the gods.

14 On ascertaining whose turn
it had been to supply
the food, they rushed
to the house of the Brahmin,

15 And pestered him with questions.
He, determined as a bull,
evading the truth about the Pāṇḍavas,
said to them:

16 "My family and I
were weeping over our lot,
when a mahā-minded Brahmin,
wise in mantras, saw us.

17 We told him everything.
That good Brahmin,
smiling, consoled us,
and said:

18 *I'll carry the food today*
to the ill-ātmaned rākṣasa.
Don't have the least worry.
With these words

19 He set out with the food
to the forest of Baka.
He must have killed Baka
out of kindness for us."

20 All the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas
were wonder-struck,
all the Vaiśyas and Śūdras
rejoiced.

21 And all the people returned
in peace to their city,
after this wonderful experience.
The Pāṇḍavas continued to live there.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

1 "Tell me, Brahmin,"
asked Janamejaya,
"what the tigers-among-men Pāṇḍavas did
after killing Baka."

2 After killing Baka, O rājā,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
they stayed with the Brahmin,
studying the Vedas.

3 Soon after this,
a rigid-vowed Brahmin
happened to come there
on a short visit.

4 The good Brahmin host
greeted him respectfully,
and offered him a room
in the house as hospitality.

5 While he stayed there, the bulls-among-men
Pāṇḍavas and their mother
one day asked him to narrate
his inspiring experiences.

6 He named the many lands, *tīrthas*,
rivers, famous kingdoms,
places of pilgrimage,
cities and villages he had visited.

7 And towards the end
of his narration, he mentioned
the marvellous svayaṁvara of Yājñasenī-
Draupadī, princess of Pāñcāla,

8 And the births of Śikhaṇḍin
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's womb-less birth too,
in the mahā-yajña of Drupada.

9 He paused; and the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas,
asked the mahā-ātmaned Brahmin
to describe in detail
these astonishing happenings.

10 "Tell us, O Brahmin," they said,
"how was Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna born
from the yajña-fire,
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī from the yajña-altar?

11 How did Drupada's son
pick up weapons-craft from Droṇa?
How and why did Droṇa break
with his loved-and-loving sakhā-friend,

12 O rājā Janamejaya (Vaiśampāyana continued),
because the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
asked him, the Brahmin
spun out the story of Draupadī's birth.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Where the Gaṅgā begins
(said the Brahmin) there lived
a rsi of mahā-tapasyā,
mahā-learned and disciplined Bharadvāja.

2 One morning, while performing
his ablutions near the Gaṅgā
he saw the apsarā Ghṛtācī,
bathing in the river.

3 A gust of wind – on the river bank –
her dress slipped off –
he saw her naked –
and he lusted for her.

4 From childhood he had been
a brahmacārī. He lusted
so strongly his semen gushed out;
he caught the drops in a *droṇa*,

5 A water-pot. From the pot
was born a son, the great,
learned Droṇa, who mastered
all the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.

6 Bharadvāja had a friend, a sakhā,
a king named Pṛṣata;
Pṛṣata had a son
whose name was Drupada.

7 Pṛṣata's son, a bull-brave Kṣatriya,
daily went to an āśrama
where he studied and played
with Droṇa.

8 When Pṛṣata died, Drupada
was installed rājā. Meanwhile,
Droṇa received news
that Paraśurāma was distributing

9 His wealth; so he hurried
to the forest, and said to Paraśurāma:
"O finest of Brahmins, I am Bharadvāja's son,
I come here for wealth."

10 Paraśurāma replied,
"Brahmin, I have given away all.
I have only my body left.
Take my body or my weapons."

11 "Give me all your weapons," said Droṇa,
"together with the arts
of using them for offensive purposes,
and for recall."

12 "Very well," said Paraśurāma.
And so Bhṛgu's descendant
handed over the weapons,
and Droṇa returned rejoicing, and grateful.

13 Because he had succeeded
in obtaining the weapon
called Brahmāstra,
Droṇa excelled all other warriors.

14 Bharadvāja's tiger-among-men son Droṇa,
now went to Drupada,
finest of men, and said,
Remember me – your friend, your sakhā?"

15 And Drupada replied,
"Uncultured is never friends
with cultured, nor chariot-hero
with non-chariot-here;
nor king with a non-rājā.
what's this friendship you speak of?"

16 Determined to teach Drupada
a lesson, wise Droṇa
hurried to Hastināpura,
the Kuru capital.

17 Bhīṣma met him there,
gave him respect and wealth,
and placed his grandsons
as pupils under him.

18 With the idea of humbling Drupada.
Droṇa summoned his pupils,
Kuntī's sons and others,
and said to them:

19 "Defectless ones, after your training
is over, promise to give me
the *dakṣiṇā* I will ask."
Arjuna and the others promised, "We will."

20 And when the Pāṇḍavas
achieved the required excellence,
their guru Droṇa explained to them
the *dakṣīṇā* he wanted.

21 "Pṛṣata's son Drupada
lives in Chatravatī.
Wrest his kingdom from him,
and give it to me."

22 The five sons of Pāṇḍu, however,
defeated Drupada in battle,
and brought him and his ministers
captive before Droṇa.

23 "I will be friends with you,
O lord of men," said Droṇa.
"Only a rājā can be friends
with a rājā. You said so.

24 So, Yajñasena-Drupada, I divide
this kingdom – your portion
is south of the Bhāgirathī,
mine north of it."

25 The Pāñcāla king Drupada heard this
(said the Brahmin),
and replied to Droṇa,
finest of weapon-wielders:

26 "Mahā-minded son of Bharadvāja!
I accept your terms,
and hereby revive
our old friendship."

27 And so, pledging friendship
between themselves,
Drona and Drupada,
both great heroes, parted.

28 But tormenting shame rankled
in Drupada's mind,
every single moment of every day.
Anguish took hold of him.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

1 Deeply disturbed, pining,
rājā Drupada went to many āśramas
of famous Brahmins,
all experts in rituals.

2 In his grief he would think
of a begetting a son,
and mutter to himself,
"I have no children.

3 *Dhik!* Shame on the sons of relatives I have!"
His grief grew,
How would sigh, thinking
how to take revenge against Droṇa.

4 But even after much thought,
Drupada found
no means of challenging
Droṇa's excellence in weapons,

5 His skill, training,
and splendid discipline,
through Kṣatriya combat. One day,
in the course of his wanderings,

6 He came to a Brahmin's āśramas
on the banks of the Gaṅgā;
all dwelling there were rigid-vowed,
all *snākata* Brahmins

7 The mahā-fortunate king saw
two Brahmins there,
Yāja and Upayāja, strict-vowed,
disciplined, Brahmā-like ṛṣis.

8 They were of Kāśyapa's *gotra,*
they were researching in the Saṁhitās;
they were considered
finest among Brahmins.

9 Drupada disciplined his senses
and earnestly propitiated
the two Brahmins.
Knowing the younger one's

10 Superiority, he secretly
propitiated Upayāja,
speaking sweetly, sitting
at his feet, anticipating

11 His least wish. In due time,
Drupada said to Upayāja,
"Noble Brahmin, if your yajña
can give me a son

12 Who will kill Droṇa,
then I promise to give you
ten crores of cattle
as a token of my gratitude.

13 If there is anything else,
O Brahmin, that you desire,
I will give that too
without any hesitation."

14 The Brahmin Upayāja replied,
"Impossible." So Drupada
recommenced his propitation
and devoted service.

15 A year passed.
Then Upayāja,
finest of the twice-born,
said pleasantly to Drupada:

16 "My elder brother, passing
through a forest, picked up
a fruit fallen on the ground,
not knowing it was unclean.

17 I was behind him.
I noticed this.
It was the wrong thing to do:
he is careless in these matters.

18 It never struck him
he had done something unclean.
A man who is lax in such matters
will compromise a second time.

19 In his guru's house,
while studying the Saṁhitās,
I noticed him eating
from other student's leftover meals.

20 He's so fond of eating he does not care.
He just loves food.
My feeling is that he is attached
to worldly things.

21 Therefore, your majesty, go to him.
He'll do the yajña for you."
Taking Upayāja's advice,
Drupada went to Yāja,

22 Though thinking poorly of him.
But propitiating him, he said,
"Noble one, I will give you
eighty thousand cows
If your help me. Hatred for Droṇa
burns me. Give me relief.

23 Droṇa, learned in the Vedas,
is an expert in the Brahmāstra.
We were friends; we fell out;
he humiliated me.

24 Droṇa, son of Bharadvāja,
is the chief ācārya of the Kauravas.
There is no Kṣatriya living
who can face up to him.

25 His bow is six arm's-lengths long,
it is fierce-looking;
and his arrows
can kill all living creatures.

26 Droṇa, Bharadvāja's son,
mahā-minded mahā-archer,
in his Brahmin's dress
is a threat to all Kṣatriyas.

27 Like Paraśurāma, son of Jamadagni,
he slaughters Kṣatriyas.
No man alive
can withstand his onslaught.

28 Like fire feeding on ghee,
Droṇa, armed with Brahmin skill
and Kṣatriya prowess,
feeds on his adversaries.

29 But your Brahmin power
is greater than his,
though his is linked to Kṣatriya-prowess.
I am only a Kṣatriya.
I seek your help,
your Brahmin excellence.

30 So I come to you,
O Yāja, in the hope
that you will perform a yajña
that will give me

31 An invincible son
powerful enough to kill Droṇa.
Take a crore of cows
if you wish." Yāja said "Very well."

32 To hold the yajña, he made preparations.
He sought
selfless Upayāja's assistance
in this difficult project.

33 And Upayāja, practiser of mahā-tapasyā,
explained to Drupada
all that was needed
for obtaining a son.

34 "You will have a son, O rājā,
according to your wishes,"
he said, "mahā-powerful,
mahā-energetic, mahā-illustrious."

35 Drupada, eager to have
a Droṇa-killing son,
quickly made arrangements
for the massive ritual.

36 Yājā chanted before the conclusion
of the *havana*, ordering the queen:
"Come, O devī! O rānī!
Come, daughter-in-law of Pṛṣata!
Come for the *mithuna*!
Come for the intercourse!
For a son and a daughter
Are waiting for you
To add to the glory of your race!"

37 The queen replied:
"My face, O Brahmin,
is lovely with make-up,
My body fragrant
with perfumes.
I am summoned
for the sake of a son.
O Yāja, my dear one,
wait a little."

38 Yāja said:
"Yāja prepared the offering,
Upayāja chanted the mantras
Whether you come,
or do not come,
the oblation will be offered,
the fruits will follow."

39 Even as he said this,
Yāja poured the libation
in the sacred fire, from which arose
a god-like boy:

40 Awe-inspiring
Sun-radiant
Shining-armoured
Gold-crowned
Sword-in-hand
Bow-armed
Loud-roaring!

41 The moment he was born
he mounted a chariot
and drove it about. The Pāñcālas
joyfully shouted, *"Sādhu! Sādhu!"*

42 Such was the joyful
horripilation of the Pāñcālas,
it seemed the earth itself
would collapse under their weight,

43 And a mahā-sky-voice proclaimed:
The child will kill Droṇa.
He will restore Pāñcāla glory.
He will remove the king's grief.

44 Then, from the yajna altar,
rose Pāñcālī, auspicious girl,
eye-ravishing Pāñcālī,
large-black-eyed,

45 Dark-skinned Pāñcālī,
Lotus-eyed lady,
Wavy-haired Pāñcālī,
Hair like darkblue clouds,
Shining coppery carved nails,
Soft eyelashes,
Swelling breasts
Shapely thighs.

46 A girl like a goddess
born to humans. Blue lotus
fragrance for a full *krośa*
flowed from her body.

47 There was none on earth
to match her loveliness.
Gods, anti-gods, and yakṣas
yearned for such celestial beauty.

48 When this graceful-hipped girl
was born, a body-less voice proclaimed:
Loveliest of ladies,
this dark-skinned beauty, Kṛṣṇā,
will be the cause of the desctruction
of the Kṣatriyas.

49 *When the time comes,*
this slim-waisted lady will fulfil
the purpose of the gods.
And the Kauravas will tremble with fear.

50 The Pāñcālas heard, and roared
like lions. The earth shook
under the weight
of the horripilating Pāñcālas.

51 Pṛṣata's daughter-in-law,
seeing the boy and girl,
said to Yāja, "Let these two know me
and none else as their mother."

52 Yāja agreed, for he wished
Drupada's welfare. The Brahmins,
pleased by the king's favours,
then named the children.

53 "Because Drupada's son
is fearlessly brave, and born,
like Dyumna, with natural armour,
let him be Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

54 And because the girl is dark-skinned,
she shall be Kṛṣṇa
the Dark One."
This is the story of their birth,
in the *mithuna* of the mahā-yajña
of Drupada.

55 Droṇa brought Dhṛṣṭadyumna
to his house,
and trained him in all
the weapons of war.

56 He knew that the will of the gods
was all-powerful;
he did this to perpetuate
his own glory.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

1 Kuntī's mahā-powerful sons heard this
and were plunged in grief;
they all looked desolated
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 The truth-speaking lady Kuntī
saw her sons
silently suffering,
and she said to Yudhiṣṭhira

3 "We have spent many nights
in this mahā-ātmaned Brahmin's house,
and lived on alms begged
from this city's generous people.

4 My foe-subduing son,
we have delighted
in the pleasures of the forests here
again and again.

5 And now they begin to get tiresome.
Besides, my son,
it is not as easy now
as it was to get alms.

6 If you think we should go
to Pāñcāla, let us go.
We have not been there before,
it will be worth visiting.

7 I have heard that alms
are easier to get in Pāñcāla,
that its ruler, king Yajñasena,
pays special regard to Brahmins.

8 Living too long in one place
is not to my liking.
If you think we should, my son,
let us go to Pāñcāla."

9 "Your least wish, mother,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira, "is for our welfare.
But I do not know
if my younger brothers are agreeable."

10 Kuntī them spoke
to Bhimasena, Arjuna,
and the twins. And they
all agreed, "So be it."

11 Kuntī then bade formal farewell
to the Brahmin,
and, with her sons, set out for mahā-ātmaned
Drupada's beautiful capital.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

1 While the Pāṇḍavas were spending
their days in disguise,
once Vyāsa, Satyavatī's son,
came to see them.

2 The foe-subduing Pāṇḍavas saw him approaching
They bowed low, and paid
their respects. They stood before him
with folded palms.

3 Pleased, he motioned towards them
to be seated.
When they had sat down,
he smiled and said to Pṛtha-Kuntī's sons:

4 "Great foe-chastisers,
are you following the śāstras,
are you abiding by dharma?
Do you offer pūjā-respect to Brahmins?
Have you been offering pūjā
where pūjā is due?"

5 Bhagavan ṛṣi Vyāsa spoke to them
about dharma and artha
and other matters.
Then he said:

6 "In a forest there lived
a mahā-ātmaned ṛṣi who had a large-hipped,
slim-waisted, lovely-eye-browed,
all-guṇa-accomplished daughter.

7 Her past karma placed her
in a pitiable condition.
That lovely, innocent girl
could not get a husband.

8 So, in her grief,
she performed severe tapasyā,
to get herself a husband.
Śaṅkara-Śiva, pleased with her penance,

9 Said to the illustrious girl,
'Ask anything you like,
gracious one. I am here
to grant you a boon.'

10 Her one interest was to benefit herself,
so she said repeatedly to the Supreme One,
'I want an all-guṇa-accomplished husband,'

11 Īsāna-Śiva, eloquent deity,
said to her, 'Gracious one,
you will have five husbands,
from the royal Bhāratas.'

12 'Lord God,' she replied
to the boon-giving deity,
'I seek your grace,
but I want only one husband.'

13 And he said to her,
in his unanswerable way,
'Five times you implored me,
Give me a husband!

14 'Therefore you will have five husbands –
in another life.'
That girl is now Drupada's
goddess-like yajña-born daughter.
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, destined
to be the wife of all of you.
O mahā-powerful heroes,

15 Go therefore to the city
of Pāñcāla. Live there
for a while. You will be happy
having her for wife."

16 Mahā-illustrious Vyāsa of mahā-tapasyā,
the Pāṇḍavas' Pitāmaha,
said this to Kuntī and her sons,
and returned to where he came from.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

1 When bhagavān Vyāsa left,
the five bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
pushed ahead, placing Kuntī
their mother in front.

2 The foe-subduers took leave
of the Brahmin,
and walked north
to their destination;

3 Travelling day and night
they came to Somāśrama.
Pāṇḍu's sons, tigers-among-men,
came to the Gaṅgā,

4 From here mahā-chariot-hero Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
walked ahead with a torch,
to light the way for them
and to protect them.

5 The proud rājā of the gandharvas
happened at the time
to be sporting with his wives
in the waters of the Gaṅgā.

6 He heard the footsteps
of the approaching Pāṇḍavas.
Enraged, the powerful king
could not control himself.

7 He strung his fearful bow
and, pointing to the Pāṇḍavas
and their mother, shouted
in their direction:

8 "Listen! The first eighty *lavas*
of the dark twilight
are for yaksas, gandharvas,
and rākṣasas, who wander

9 Where they please when the setting sun
darkens the sky.
The remainder of the day
is kept aside for mortals.

10 Should mortals out of greed
transgress our allotted time,
and dare to come near us, we gandharvas
and rakṣasas imprison the fools.

11 Even those who are learned in the Vedas
condemn such mortals –
even army-leading kings – who come
near lakes and rivers at such a time.

12 Beware, mortal! Stand still!
Don't come near me!
I bathe in the waters
of the Bhāgīrathī river.

13 I am Aṅgāraparṇa,
the gandharva who knows no power
save his own. I am strong!
Proud! I am Kubera's close friend.

14 This forest on the Gaṅgā's banks
belongs to me! My forest!
The forest of Aṅgāraparṇa!
I sport here as I please.

15 And when I am here,
none comes here – no god,
no human, no corpse-eating beast,
Who do you think you are?"

16 "Scoundrel!" shouted Arjuna.
"Who dares deny entry
to the ocean, the Himalayas, or this Gaṅgā
at day, night, or saṁdhya-twilight?

17 Sky-travelling creature,
don't you know the holy Gaṅgā
allots no special time for visitors,
whether hungry or full?

18 Our shakti is great –
and we do not care if you object.
Only the impotent, I think,
first seek your permission.

19 This is the holy Gaṅgā falling
from the golden peaks
of Himavant
into the ocean
where seven streams enter –

20 Seven sisters
Gaṅgā
Yamunā
Rising near the fig-tree Sarasvatī
Rathasthā
Sarayū
Gomatī
Gaṇḍakī.

21 To drink
of the waters
of these rivers
Is to cleanse
oneself
of all demerits.
Listen to me,
gandharva!
This holy Gaṅgā;
Flowing
through heaven
is Alakanandā;

22 Flowing
through the pitṛ-regions,
it is Vaitaraṇī,
which evil-karma-doers
cannot cross.
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa

23 Himself said
this holy river
is for all
at all times.
You stopping us
is not Sanātana Dharma.

24 Who is to prevent us
from touching
these holy waters
of the Bhāgīrathī
which are open
for all to touch?"

25 Inflamed, Aṅgāraparṇa
strung his bow and let loose
a volley of arrows
like venomous snakes.

26 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, excellent Pāṇḍava,
blocked all of them
with his shield; in his right hand
he held aloft a torch.

27 "Gandharva!" he shouted.
"Don't frighten those
who know the use of weapons –
with your water-bubble arrows.

28 I know gandharvas are said
to be superior to mortals.
Good! I'll use fair means –
I'll use divine weapons too.

29 Here's my Āgneya fire-missile shooting
towards you! Bṛhaspati,
Śatakratu-Indra's guru, gave it
to Bharadvāja.

30 Bharadvāja passed it on
to Agniveśa, and Agniveśa
to my guru Droṇa; and from Droṇa
it came to me."

31 He had hardly finished speaking
when he angrily hurled
the dreadful fire-bolt.
Aṅgāraparṇa's chariot disintegrated.

32 Unchārioted, he collapsed, unconscious;
even as he fell,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna seized the powerful
gandharva's hair,

33 Fragrant with innumerable flowers,
and dragged him
senseless
towards his brothers.

34 The gandharva's wife Kumbhīnasī
saw this and,
eager to save her husband,
ran imploring to Yudhiṣṭhira.

35 "*Prabhu*! Lord!" she pleaded.
"Be kind to me!
I am Kumbhīnasī, his wife.
O set him free!"

36 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "*Tāta*, dear brother,
release him. Who kills
a defeated or a defenceless enemy,
or a woman-protected enemy?"

37 "Gandharva," said Arjuna,
"go. Do not grieve.
Yudhiṣṭhira, rājā of the Kurus,
is merciful to you."

38 "You have defeated me,"
the gandharva replied,
"so I renounce my name,
Aṅgāraparṇa. No point boasting
I am strong when a mere mortal
has routed me.

39 But I think myself favoured
to have met an opponent
who uses divine weapons.
And if Arjuna so wishes,
I shall gladly impart
gandharva-māyā to him.

40 Look how your fire-missile
has consumed my incomparable chariot!
They call me Citraratha,
the Splendid-Charioted One –
now I am Dagdharatha,
the One with the Burnt Chariot.

41 The knowledge which
by severe tapasyā I acquired,
I will today hand over
to my mahā-ātmaned opponent
who, out of kindness,
has spared my life.

42 What great goodness
does he not deserve who,
having routed an enemy,
yet spares his life?

43 The knowledge I possess
is called Cākṣuṣi.
Manu taught it to Soma,
Soma to Viśvāvasu,
and from Viśvāvasu
it passed on to me.

44 Because it came from a guru
to a coward like me, it lies useless.
Let me describe
its super-normal powers.

45 It will enable you to see
whatever you wish to see
in the three worlds,
and in whatever form you wish to see it.

46 This power is acquired
by standing on one leg for six months.
You do not have to do anything –
I will pass it on to you.

47 O rājā! Because we have
this special power,
we excel mortals. Our special vision
makes us like gods.

48 To each of your brothers
and to you, O finest of men,
I give one hundred horses
born in the realms of the gandharvas.

49 Gods and gandharvas ride them;
they are divinely-hued,
and thought-swift; they look lean,
but never tire or slacken.

50 Long ago Mahendra-Indra
fashioned thunder to destroy Vṛtra;
striking the anti-god's head,
it splintered in a thousand pieces.

51 The gods picked up the pieces
and worshipped them.
All the wealth and glory in this world.
is just one porttion of that thunder.

52 Thunder
the hands of Brahmins
Thunder
the chariots of Kṣatriyas
Thunder
the gift-giving of Vaiśyas
Thunder
the service of the Śūdras

53 Thunder
the horses of Kṣatriyas –
Horses
that are never to be killed
Horses
that are born of Vaḍavā
Horses
that are incomparably fearless

54 Horses
that assume any colour they please
Horses
that gallop at the owner's will
Horses
born in the realm of the gandharvas
Horses
that will gratify all desire."

55 "If, O gandharva," said Arjuna,
"you give me these horses
and the knowledge just for sparing you,
I refuse to accept them."

56 The gandharva replied, "To meet
a noble man is a pleasure.
In addition you spared my life.
I am pleased. Take my gifts.

57 O bull-brave Bharata!
If you prefer an exchange,
I will take from you
your marvellous Āgneya fire-missile."

58 "Agreed," replied Arjuna,
"your horses for my missile.
May our friendship last forever.
And now, my friend, *sakhé*, tell me:
What is it that we did
that so offended the gandharvas?

59 We know how to deal
with enemies: we are learned
in the Vedas, proficient in dharma.
What did we do last night
in the course of our travels
that deserved rebuke?"

60 The gandharva said, "Sons of Pāṇḍu!
No sacred fire.
No sacred oblations.
No Brahmin priest
walks with you. For these reasons,
I decided to attack you.

61 So, in spite of your glory,
of which I was aware,
I made up my mind
to teach you a lesson.

62 Wise yaksas, rākṣasas,
gandharvas, *piṣācas*,
nagas and Danava-antigods
speak highly of the Kuru race.

63 Indeed, I have heard
from Nārada and other divine ṛṣis
only the highest praise
of your ancestors' greatness;

64 And in the course of my wanderings
on this ocean-girdled earth,
I have witnessed your glory
with my own eyes.

65 It so happens, Arjuna,
that your Droṇa, an ācārya
whose fame in archery
and Veda-wisdom shines
in the three worlds –
I know him well.

66 And I know about Dharma,
Vayu, Śakra-Indra, the Aśvins,
and Pāṇḍu – your ancestors –
five gods, and one mortal.

67 I knew you were famous,
mahā-ātmaned,
mighty arms-wielder;
I knew all your brothers;

68 I knew of your dharma,
your steadfastness,
your clear understanding, pure conduct –
yet I dared to attack you.

69 For you know, O great Kaurava,
that no man who respects his manhood
will tolerate misconduct
in front of his wife.

70 Night-time is when our strength increases,
O son of Kuntī.
My wife happened to be with me.
Anger filled me.

71 O descendant of Tapatī,
you humbled me in battle.
Let me tell you plainly
why I was defeated.

72 Brahmacarya is the best dharma.
And you practise it.
That was why you were able
to defeat me in battle.

73 If a sex-indulging Kṣatriya
engages a gandharva
in battle at night –
he is doomed, he will die.

74 But even a sex-indulging Kṣatriya,
if he places a Brahmin purohita
in front of him,
will be able to vanquish night-rangers.

75 Decendant of Tapatī, Tāpatya-Arjuna,
this is the reason that men
should always engage sense-disciplined
purohitas in order to achieve

76 Whatever they wish to achieve.
A purohita fit for kings
is one who knows
the six-branched Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
who is a dharmātmā, truthful,
clean-minded and sense-subdued.

77 A rājā with such a purohita
wins victories in this world
and heaven in the next,
because such a wise-in-dharma purohita
gives sound moral advice
in sensible, well-spoken words.

78 It is a rājā's duty, therefore,
to choose an illustrious purohita
who will refine what he possesses,
and acquire what he needs.

79 A man seeking his own welfare
should look for such a purohita;
it becomes possible then for him
to enjoy the sea-surrounded earth.

80 Mere bravery is not enough,
nor nobility of birth.
A king without such a Brahmin
never expands his realm.

81 Therefore, O Kaurava-well-wishing Arjuna,
do I say that kingdoms
with Brahmins to guide them
remain kingdoms for long,"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

1 "You addressed me," said Arjuna,
"as Tapatī's descendant, Tāpatya.
What did you mean by that?
Tell me in detail.

2 We, noble one, are Kuntī's sons,
Kaunteyas. Who is Tapatī?
Why do you call us Tāpatyas?
I am most curious."

3 Because Kuntī's son, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
asked him (said Vaiśampāyana),
the gandharva narrated a story
famous in all the three worlds.

4 "Finest of learned men, Pārtha-Arjuna,"
said the gandharva,
"listen to me as I narrate
this fascinating tale.

5 Listen carefully,
and you will understand
why I decided to address you
as Tāpatya.

6 He, who floods the sky
with the glory of his radiance,
had a daughter named Tapatī,
shining-splendid like him.

7 Tapatī, Vivasvat's daughter,
was Sāvitrī's sister.
The three worlds honoured her
for her great tapasyā.

8 No goddess, no anti-goddess,
no yakṣī, no rākṣasī,
no apsarā, no gandharvī
equalled her in beauty:

9 Symmetrical figure
Faultless features
Large black eyes
Elegantly dressed
Chaste and sweet-tempered.

10 O great Bharata, seeing her,
Vivasvat-Sūrya thought: *What man*
is so handsome, talented, moral, and wise
as to be her husband?

11 When she crossed puberty,
his worry increased;
he had only one thought –
how to find her a husband.

12 A great Kaurava scion,
the mighty king Saṁvaraṇa
son of Ṛkṣa, was a worshipper
of the sun-god Sūrya,

13 Whom he propitiated with
arghya-welcome, garlands, scents,
with purity of mind and body,
fasts, vows, and strict tapasyā.

14 Saṁvaraṇa's intense bhakti
for radiant Sūrya
was marked by the deepest humility
and self-abnegation.

15 Sūrya noted his humility,
handsomeness and wisdom-in-dharma,
and thought he would make
the ideal husband for Tapatī.

16 In fact, O descendant of Kuru,
Sūrya made up his mind
to bestow his daughter
on world-celebrated Saṁvaraṇa.

17 As Sūrya fills the sky
with incomparable splendour,
Saṁvaraṇa filled the earth
with the lustre of his achievements.

18 As Veda-knowing men worship
the splendid sun,
so Brahmins and lesser-born ones
honoured great Saṁvaraṇa.

19 Like the sun Sūrya,
Saṁvaraṇa scorched his enemies;
like the moon Soma,
he soothed his allies.

20 Which is why, O great Kaurava,
Tapana the Sun was resolved
on bestowing his daughter Tapatī
on illustrious Saṁvaraṇa.

21 It so happened once
that this fortune-favoured,
shining-with-prowess rājā
went hunting in a hill-region.

22 In the course of the hunt,
the rājā's incomparable horse,
overcome with thirst and hunger,
collapsed and died.

23 He left his dead horse
and walked up the hill.
There he saw a large-eyed girl
of breathtaking beauty.

24 The great foe-chastising,
lion-among-kings monarch, alone there,
saw her alone there,
and looked straight at her.

25 For a moment he thought
she was the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī.
Her beauty radiated from her
like sunrays from the sun.

26 Her body shone
like a straight flame,
her happy spotless beauty
was like the moon's.

27 She stood, a black-eyed beauty
on the hill-top,
statuesque;
like a golden girl.

28 The hill, its creepers,
its bushes, all flamed
with the golden beauty
of the golden girl.

29 Looking at her, the rājā felt
he had never seen
a beautiful woman before.
My eyes are blessed, he thought.

30 *Nothing, nothing,* he thought,
no beauty I have ever seen
since my birth has been
as beautiful as this girl.

31 She had trapped his mind
    and his eyes. He stood
transfixed, as if tied with ropes,
    as if senseless.

32 He thought: *The Creator*
    must have squeezed all beauty
from gods, anti-gods and mortals
    to produce this paragon.

33 These thoughts raced in his mind.
    Saṁvaraṇa said to himself:
It is impossible there is another
    like her in the three worlds.

34 The noble-born king stood there
    gazing at her noble beauty,
and the arrows of the god of love
    pierced his heart.

35 Suffering the fire of Manmatha, the mind-churner,
    the king turned
to the full-blossomed, innocent girl,
    and said:

36 'Lady with smooth and tapering thighs
    like a plantain tree!
Who are you? whose daughter?
    Why are you here alone,
sweet-smiling one, wandering
    in these desolate woods?

37 O faultless-featured lady!
    Lovely-ornamented one!
Lovelier than the ornaments you wear
    is the ornament you are.

38 Are you a devī or an asurī?
a yakṣī, a rākṣasī,
a nāga-girl from Bhogavatī,
a gandharvī? You cannot be human.

39 Lovely-bodied one, Varāṅganā!
I have not seen beauty,
I have not heard of beauty
to equal yours.

40 Lovely-featured one,
lotus-leaf-eyed lady,
radiant moon-faced one,
I saw you, I loved you.
The god of love Manmatha
has me spellbound.'

41 The king spoke to her in the forest
(continued the gandharva),
his heart aflame with kāma,
but she did not say a word.

42 Like one possessed, he kept repeating
his love for her –
when suddenly the large-eyed girl
vanished like a flash of lightning.

43 Like a man crazed
he wandered in the woods,
desperately searching
for the lotus-eyed girl.

44 But he could not find her.
Maddened with grief,
he stood still, moaning
his love for the girl.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

1 When the girl vanished
(continued the gandharva),
the foe-chastising, love-smitten king
fell on the ground.

2 And even as he fell,
the sweet-smiling, full-hipped girl
re-appeared,
and stood in front of him.

3 Continuing to smile, she,
lady of radiant beauty,
said to the kāma-obsessed king
these gracious words,

4 These words of incomparable sweetness :
'Rise, rise, noble one.
Great foe-conqueror,
O best of kings,

5 Most famous of heroes,
honoured the world over,
why are you so afflicted?'
He heard these sweet words,

6 Opened his eyes,
and saw standing in front of him
the full-hipped, black-eyed girl;
and he said to her,

7 His voice tremulous with feeling,
his heart filled with passion:
'Beautiful one,
your black eyes have ravished me;

8 I burn in the fire
of Manmatha. O be mine!
Make me yours;
my life is draining away . . . . O lotus-eyed

9 Lady, large-eyed lovely one,
I die for love of you.
Day and night I pine for you.
The god of love has pierced me
with his arrows.
The snake of kāma has bitten me.

10 Tapering-thighed lady, spotlessly lovely one,
you who speak
with the sweetness of a *kinnara,*
help me! have pity on me!

11 What will I do without you,
O lovely-smiling, shy one,
lotus-faced one, moon-faced one –
O, I shall die!

12 Kamalapatrākṣī, lotus-eyed one,
Viśālākṣī, large-eyed one,
I am hounded by Kāma
the god of love – help me!

13 O black-eyed beauty,
do not refuse me!
Free me from this pain –
give me your love.

14 The moment I saw you,
O fortune-favoured one,
I loved you. My mind reels.
I can never love another.

15 Consider me your slave,
your bhakta. Love me!
O Viśālākṣī, large-eyed lady,
the moment I saw you,

16 That instant the god of love smote me,
his arrows pierced me.
Lotus-eyed, large-eyed lady,
that fire still rages in me.

17 Extinguish that mind-churming agony
with the cool water of your love!
Be one with me, and tame
the furious kāma inside me –

18 For Kāma the god of love
has routed my heart –
he shoots incessantly at me
with his sharp arrows.

19 Rambhoru, sensuous-hipped one,
marry me as gandharvas do,
for of all marriage customs
the gāndharva is considered the best.'

20 Tapatī said, 'I am not free, O rājā,
to choose. I am a virgin
in the care of my father.
It you love me, ask him.

21 Even as your heart, O lord of men,
fell in love with me
at first sight, I lost my heart too
at first sight.

22 O finest of kings;
I am not mistress of myself,
so I cannot be one with you.
Women are never free.

23 What girl is there
in the three worlds
who would not want you for husband –
so noble-born, so lovingly devoted?

24 At the right time,
ask my father Āditya-Sūrya
for my hand – approach him
respectfully, formally, with tapasyā.

25 If my father, O rājā,
bestows me on you, O conqueror of enemies,
I will be your devoted wife
for ever.

26 O bull-brave Kṣatriya, I am Tapatī,
Sāvitrī's younger sister.
I am the daughter of Savitā.
He illumines the universe"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

1 "With these words, the faultless girl
ascended and disappeared
(continued the gandharva).
The rājā fell in a swoon.

2 His ministers and attendants,
searching long for their rājā,
found him in that senseless state,
in that mahā-forest.

3 The chief minister
saw the illustrious monarch
that greatest of bowmen, fallen
like Śakra-Indra's war flag

4 Alone and forsaken,
the king seemed to have shrivelled
into ashes. Hurriedly,
respectfully he picked up

5 The kāma-confused king, as a father
raises a fallen son.
The king was still unconscious,
passion still overpowered him.

6 Old in years and ripe in wisdom,
accomplished and tactful,
the minister lifted the king,
and soothingly

7 Said these gentle words
to him, in a sweet voice;
'My noble lord, be calm.
Defectless one, may you prosper!"

8 The minister had the impression
that the king had collapsed
from exhaustion, from hunger
and thirst.

9 So he sprinkled the crown-less head
of his monarch
with cool water
scented with lotus-perfume.

10 The raja recovered his senses.
Immediately, he dismissed
all his retinue –
all except that minister.

11 When the crowd of attendants
had left, as ordered
by the rājā, he sat down
again on the hill-slope.

12 Purifying his thoughts,
he offered
añjali-homage to Sūrya,
with his face turned upward.

13 Foe-conquering king Saṁvaraṇa
at that time
mentally visioned his purohita,
the splendid ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha.

14 Many days and nights
he stood in that position.
On the twelfth day
the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha came to him.

15 Self-disciplined, the mahā-ṛṣi
knew by his divine insight
that the king's heart
had been stolen by Tapatī.

16 As soon as he realised this,
he made up his mind
to help the king, and actually
assured him of such help.

17 In the presence of the king
the bhagavān ṛṣi rose skyward,
himself dazzling like the sun,
to meet dazzling Bhāskara-Sūrya.

18 Vasiṣṭha did *añjali* before Sūrya,
god of the thousand rays,
and introduced himself saying,
'I am Vasiṣṭha

19 I bow to Sūrya
the Unborn
the Purifier of the Three Worlds
the Indwelling Lord
the Dispenser of Light
the Giver and Taker of Life
the Merciful God

20 The Wisdom of the Wise
The Light of the Universe
The Benefactor of Life
The Self-Born One
The Thousand-Eyed One
The Ceaseless Radiance

21 The Single Eye of the World
The Source of Life
The Guardian and Sustainer
The Embodiment of the Vedas
The Triple Deity Viṣṇu
Brahmā-Nārāyana-Viriñca-Śaṁkara-Śiva'

22 Mahā-radiant Vivasvat-Sūrya
said to the excelling muni,
'Mahā-ṛṣi, you are welcome.
What do you wish?

23 O most fortunate of men,
finest of eloquent speakers!
Whatever you wish is yours,
no matter how hard to get.

24 Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha, excellent ṛṣi
of maha-tapasyā, listened to Sūrya,
bowed his head,
and said;

25 'I come here, O Sūrya,
to ask, for Saṁvaraṇa,
the hand of your daughter Tapatī,
Savitrī's younger sister.

26 Saṁvaraṇa is a rājā
of marvellous accomplishments,
learned in dharma and artha,
the best husband for your daughter.'

27 Pleased with these words,
Divākara-Surya resolved to bestow
his daughter on Saṁvaraṇa.
He said to Vasiṣṭha:

28 'Saṁvaraṇa is the best of rājās.
You are the best of ṛṣis.
Tapatī is the best of daughters.
What better can I do?'

29 And Tapana-Sūrya gave his daughter Tapatī
to mahā-ātmaned Vasiṣṭha,
that the ṛṣi might in turn bestow
the lovely girl on Saṁvaraṇa.

30 Mahā-ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
accepted Tapatī,
took leave of Sūrya,
and returned

31 To where the bull-brave Kaurava rājā was,
overcome by Manmatha,
the mind-churning god of love:
So overcome was his heart,

32 That when he saw Tapatī,
the celestially beautiful sweet-smiling girl,
coming with Vasiṣṭha,
he could not contain his joy.

33 The lady of ravishing eyes
descended from the sky
like lightning irradiating
the ten points of the heavens.

34 This is the story of how the pure-ātmaned
bhagavan ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
came to the rājā who endured
the penance of twelve nights.

35 This is the story of how
Saṁvaraṇa, through penance,
and with the help of Vasiṣṭha,
succeeded in marrying Tapatī.

36 This is the story of how
the bull-among-men king accepted Tapatī
on the hill-slope frequented
by gods and gandharvas.

37 And the rāja-ṛṣi Saṁvaraṇa sought
Vasiṣṭha's permission
to enjoy his wife
on the enchanting hill.

38 He delegated his minister
to rule, in his absence,
his kingdom, his capital,
his woods and forests.

39 Vasiṣṭha bid the king farewell,
and left. And rājā Saṁvaraṇa
enjoyed himself on that hill
like a god.

40 For twelve years the rājā
and his wife delighted
in each other's company
in the hill's woods and forests.

41 O Bharata descendant Arjuna!
Indra, the thousand-eyed god,
withheld rain from his kingdom
during those twelve years.

42 O great foe-conqueror!
People, plants,
crops, animals, everything
withered and perished.

43 For twelve terrifying years,
not even a single drop of dew
fell in Saṁvaraṇa's kingdom.
No crops could grow.

44 Bewildered, traumatised people in thousands
abandoned their wives
and their children, and wandered
aimlessly in all directions,
discarding all norms
of civilised behaviour.

45 Crazed with hunger,
the people left their homes,
and driven by despair
scattered all over the kingdom.

46 They moved about like corpses,
like skeletons; and the city
became a land of the dead
and the dying.

47 The bhagavān ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha saw this,
and was stirred to pity.
The dharmātmā muni decided
to bring back rain.

48 The first thing he did
was to bring
the long absent Saṁvaraṇa
back to the capital.

49 And as soon as the lion-brave king
set foot in his capital, Surārihā-Indra,
destroyer of the enemies of the gods,
sent rain pouring down.

50 And crops again flourished.
Revived by Saṁvaraṇa,
the people and the kingdom
smiled as before.

51 And lord-of-men Saṁvaraṇa and his wife
Tapatī performed yajñas
for twelve years, as Marut-pati
Indra did with his wife Śaci.

52 This, Arjuna, is the story
of mahā-fortunate Tapatī,
daughter of Vivasvat-Sūrya.
You are called Tāpatya because

53 Of her, for king Saṁvaraṇa
had a son by her
whose name was Kuru.
You, as Kuru-descendant, are Tāpatya.

54 Because you are descended
from Kuru, you are a Kaurava,
as those descended from Puru
are Pauravas;

55 Descendants of Ajamīḍha
are called the Ājamīḍhas,
of Bharata the Bhāratas.
Proceed ahead now with your purohita."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

1 O bull-brave Janamejaya! (said Vaiśampāyana)
Arjuna heard the words
of the gandharva, and kept
looking at him with bhakti
radiant like the full moon.

2 Even more curious
after hearing of Vasiṣṭha's glory,
the greatest of Kuru bowmen Arjuna
said to the gandharva:

3 "I am fascinated by the story
of tapasyā-powerful Vasiṣṭha.
I would like to know
about him in detail.

4 O chief of the gandharvas,
who was this bhagavān ṛṣi
whom you have described
as the purohita of my ancestors?"

5 The gandharva replied:
"Vasiṣṭha was Brahmā's mind-born son;
Arundhatī's husband;
Kāma and Anger,

6 Which the gods could not conquer,
conquered by him,
massaged his feet in homage.
Vaśa means to subdue;
because he subdued his senses,
he was called Vasiṣṭha.

7 Though he was angered
by Viśvāmitra's offence,
and grieved at the loss of his sons,
he did not retaliate

8 A man of great shakti,
he became like one shakti-less.
He refused to take revenge.
He could have brought
his sons back to life; but he refrained.
Just as the great ocean

9 Does not exceed the limits
of its shores, he stayed
within the limits of reason.
Because he was their purohita,

10 The dynasty of Ikṣvāku
became the world's ruling power.
Because the shining ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
performed for them

11 All their varied yajñas,
they were successful.
Bṛhaspati was the purohita of the gods,
Vasiṣṭha the purohita of the kings.

12 My advice: Always appoint
a purohita who values dharma,
who practises dharma,
who is proficient in the Vedas.
Only such a guṇa-rich Brahmin
should be your purohita.

13 A high-born Kṣatriya,
eager to extend his dominion,
should first appoint a purohita.
First a Brahmin, then the world.

14 Therefore, I would recommend
that you appoint a learned,
sense-subdued dharma-artha-kāma-
knowing Brahmin as your purohita."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 "How did Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha,
both heads of celestial āśramas,
happen to quarrel?"
asked Arjuna.

2 Partha-Arjuna (replied the gandharva),
the life-story of Vasiṣṭha
is respected everywhere as a Purāṇa,
Let me give it to you.

3 O bull-brave Bharata!
There was once a powerful king
of Kanyākubja named Gādhi.
He was Kuśika's son.

4 His son was Viśvāmitra,
a foe-subduing dharmātmā.
He controlled a large army
of foot-soldiers and animals.

5 It so happened that one day
he and his ministers entered
a dense forest for hunting boar and deer;
the place enchanted him.

6 And in the course of the hunt,
tired and thirsty,
he happened to come upon
the āśrama of Vasiṣṭha

7 Vasiṣṭha, shining respect-giving ṛṣi,
seeing him approach,
came forward
to welcome Viśvāmitra, best of men.

8 Vasiṣṭha offered *arghya*
to Viśvāmitra, with water
to wash his face and feet,
and fruits and butter to eat.

9 Mahātmā Vasiṣṭha
had a wish-fulfilling cow
called Kāmadhenu.
This cow of plenty had only
to be commanded "Give",
and she granted all wishes.

10 The ṛṣi collected from her
wild fruit, sweet corn
of garden and field, milk,
six amṛta-like juices,

11 Many kinds of delicious food
for chewing, sucking,
and drinking; costly gems,
and luxurious dresses.

12 The great lord Viśvāmitra
was honoured with these gifts.
He, his ministers, and soldiers
were greatly pleased.

13 He was wonderstruck seeing
Kāmadhenu of six graces:
head, eyes, ears,
flanks, hips, and udders.
Her two eyes, two ears, and dewlap –
were five exquisite delights.

14 Her eyes were frog-sized,
udders round and full;
she had magnificent horns,
uplifted ears, a splendid tail.

15 The son of Gādhi, Viśvāmitra,
was enchanted by the sight.
Praising delight-giving Nandinī,
the rājā said:

16 "Noble Brahmin! Mahā-muni!
Give me Nandinī, cow of plenty.
Take ten crore cows,
take and enjoy my kingdom."

17 Vasiṣṭha replied "Defectless one,
I need this milk-rich cow
for gods, pitrs, guests, and yajñas.
No kingdoms can buy Nandinī."

18 "I am a Kṣatriya," said Viśvāmitra,
"you a Brahmin,
given to study and tapasyā.
What can a peace-loving Brahmin do?

19 I am a Kṣatriya,
and force is my dharma.
I will use force;
I will take Nandinī by force,
if even ten crore cows fail
to satisfy you."

20 "You are strong, you are a rājā, a Kṣatriya,
you are with an army,"
said Vasiṣṭha.
"Don't just think – do it!"

21 Immediately, O Pārtha-Arjuna,
Viśvāmitra seized
swan-white Nandinī,
moon-white Nandinī.

22 He beat her with a stick,
dragging her right and left.
Auspicious Nandinī moaned;
she rushed to Vasiṣṭha.

23 She stood near him,
she looked at him.
Though hit repeatedly,
she did not move.

24 "Sweet Nandinī," said Vasiṣṭha,
"cry, my dear one! Cry!
But what can I do? I am a Brahmin.
I must overlook Viśvāmitra
though he beats you
and drags you away."

25 Nandinī, frightened by Viśvāmitra
and Viśvāmitra's accompanying troops,
nuzzled even closer
to Vasiṣṭha.

26 "Bhagavan, revered one," she said,
"they beat me with sticks.
I have none to help me.
O do not leave me!"

27 But the mahā-muni
would not give up patience,
nor would he break his vow,
though touched by Nandinī's suffering.

28 Vasiṣṭha said, "A Kṣatriya's strength
lies in his body, a Brahmin's
lies in the spirit of fortitude.
I will not give up fortitude."

29 "Bhagavan, revered one," said Nandinī,
"what have I done that you
should abandon me? If you, O Brahmin,
help me, no one can harm me."

30 "Gracious Nandinī," said Vasiṣṭha,
"I have not abandoned you.
Stay here – if you can. Look!
Your calf is being dragged away."

31 When she heard the words
"Stay here",
Nandinī raised her head and neck.
A terrifying change occurred.

32 Her eyes turned red with anger,
she bellowed and lunged wildly
at Vaiśvāmitra's soldiers.
They had struck her

33 And dragged her, and now
she turned on them,
swollen with anger,
her eyes flaming in fury.

34 Impossible even to look at her!–
She flamed like the sun
at high noon! A fiery shower
of coals scattered from her tail.

35 And suddenly, from her tail
issued an army of Pahlavas,
from her udders sprang Draviḍas
and Śakas,
from her yoni sprang
a host of Yavanas.

36 Her urine became an army of Kāñcis,
her dung an army of Śabaras;
the froth of her mouth
produced Kirātas,
Pauṇḍras, and fierce Siṁhālas
and Barbaras;

37 From her flanks appeared
Cibukas and Pulindas,
Cīnas and Hunas,
Keralas and other *mlecchas*.

38 These huge *mleccha* armies,
variously uniformed
and armed with all kinds of weapons,
instantly on creation

39 Spread out in ranks,
and launched a counter-attack
against Viśvāmitra's soldiers –
five or seven against one.

40 Harassed with strange weapons,
the army of Viśvāmitra scattered,
and panic-stricken fled
in every direction.

41 But, O bull-brave Bharata,
the soldiers of Vasiṣṭha,
though enraged, did not kill
a single soldier of Viśvāmitra.

42 The celestial cow Nandinī
in this way drove
the soldiers back three *yojanas*.
Vaiśvāmitra's soldiers,

43 Terrified, sought refuge
wherever they could,
shrieking for mercy.
Viśvāmitra, seeing this,

44 Ordered a huge shower of arrows
at Vasiṣṭha's soldiers,
but Vasiṣṭha
blocked the sharp,

45 Flat and angular missiles
with a plain bamboo barricade.
Then Viśvāmitra released
a volley of celestial –

46 Āgneya, Vāruna, Aindra, Vyāvya
and Yāmya – missiles –
incandescent like yugānta-flames –
and attacked Vasiṣṭha –

47 But Vasiṣṭha, smiling,
with the help of Brāhma-Śakti
repulsed the missiles
and the attack.

48 The missiles plopped harmlessly
on the ground.
Vasiṣṭha shouted across the field
to Viśvāmitra:

49 "Fearful son of Gādhi! Mahārāja!
You are finished!
If you have any more fight left in you,
show it! Here I stand!"

50 Viśvāmitra's soldiers
were broken in spirit.
He had no means
to take up the challenge.

51 Impressed with the display
of Brāhma-power,
disgusted with so-called Kṣatriya-might,
Viśvāmitra said:

52 "Shame on Kṣatriya-strength!
It is hollow. The only strength
worth having
is Brāhma-strength.

53 Real strength lies
in the strength of tapasyā."
That shining king,
noble Viśvāmitra,

54 Renounced his kingdom,
his royal pleasures,
and began to practise tapasyā.
He shone with tapasyā.

55 The worlds were filled with his radiance
of his Brahmin-becoming.
Kuśika's grandson Viśvāmitra
drank *soma* with Indra.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 O Pārtha-Arjuna (continued the gandharva),
once upon a time there was
a famous rājā named Kalmāṣapāda,
of the race of Ikṣvāku.

2 One day this rājā set out
from his capital to hunt.
He was able to kill
many boars and deer,

3 And many rhinoceroses
in a mahā-fearful forest.
Then he tired of killing,
gave up hunting, and returned.

4 This rājā – whom illustrious Viśvāmitra
wanted to make his yājya-institutor –
was passing through a narrow path
in the forest. He was tired,

5 Hungry and thirsty. Śakti,
son of mahātmā Vasiṣṭha,
the eldest of Vasiṣṭha's
hundred sons,

6 A splendid, shining ṛṣi
himself, happened
to be approaching
from the opposite direction.

7 The king shouted:
"Out of my way!"
The ṛṣi replied
sweetly and gently:

8 "Mahārājā, eternal dharma
gives me right of way.
All dharmas say a king
should yield way to a Brahmin."

9 Both stood firm.
"Move aside," said the king.
"Step aside," said the ṛṣi.
They said nothing else.

10 The ṛṣi had dharma on his side,
and stood firm.
The rājā had anger and pride,
and would not relent.

11 Infuriated by the stubborn ṛṣi,
the king, like a foolish rākṣasa,
lifted his whip;
and lashed out at the ṛṣi

12 And that excellent muni, Vasiṣṭha's son,
lost his temper
when struck by the whip,
and cursed the excellent king:

13 "Because you, despicable rājā,
hit me, a ṛṣi, like a rākṣasa,
you will from today
be turned into a cannibal.

14 Go! Wander over the world,
despicable and foolish king!
Live on human flesh!
I curse you!" said Śakti.

15 Viśvāmitra happened to pass by.
(He had had a quarrel
with Vasiṣṭha regarding who would be
the yājña-master of the yajña.

16 Severely-ascetic Viśvāmitra,
most powerful of ṛṣis,
came upon the two quarrelling
(continued the gandharva).

17 After the ṛṣi's curse was pronounced,
Kalmāṣapāda realised that the ṛṣi
was none other than Vasiṣṭha's son,
as illustrious as Vasiṣṭha himself.

18 Hoping to gain from it,
Viśvāmitra hid himself
and listened
to the two squabbling.

19 Finest of kings Kalmāṣapāda,
cursed by Śakti,
quickly praised Sakti
and sought his pardon.

20 Viśvāmitra, who knew
the king's temperament,
projected a rākṣasa
into Kalmāṣapāda's body.

21 Following Sakti's curse
and obeying Viśvāmitra,
a rākṣasa called Kiṁkara
entered the king's body.

22 When Viśvāmitra was assured
of the rākṣasa penetration,
he left the place
(continued the gandharva).

23 The king, possessed
by the rākṣasa,
was in terrible pain;
for a while he lost his senses.

24 A Brahmin passing through the forest
chanced to see him,
He was hungry,
and asked the king for some meat.

25 The rājarṣi Kalmāṣapāda said
to the Brahmin:
"Wait here, Brahmin.
I am coming.

26 When I return,
I'll give you what you want."
Saying this, the rājā left.
The good Brahmin waited.

27 The mahā-minded rājā,
taking his time,
went to the palace's
inner apartments for women.

28 He woke at midnight,
remembering his promise.
The rājā summoned his cook,
and said:

29 "Go to the forest, now!
A Brahmin is waiting
for me there. Go,
give him meat to eat."

30 The cook searched for meat,
but could not find any.
Sorrowfully he returned
to the king.

31 The rājā, possessed by the rākṣasa,
kept repeating,
without any feeling, "Human meat.
Feed him human meat."

32 "It will be done,"
said the cook, and hurried
to the execution ground,
where he got human flesh.

33 He prepared it, carefully,
cooked it, covered it
with wheat and rice, and served it
to the hungry Brahmin-ascetic.

34 The excellent Brahmin saw
with his inseeing eye
that the food was unfit to eat
and, red-eyed with anger,

35 Shouted: "Because that
contemptible king serves food
unfit to be eaten,
let that fool eat such food himself!

36 Let Śakti's curse fall on him!
Let him roam
all over the earth, persecuting
creatures and eating human flesh."

37 Second time repeated,
the curse hardened.
Soon the rākṣasa rājā
lost control of his senses.

38 Deprived of his reason
by the rākṣasa inside him,
after some days seeing in front of him
Śakti who had cursed him,

39 The king said, "Very well.
Since you have put
this angry curse on me,
I will begin by eating you!"

40 His first victim was Śakti,
whom he killed and devoured
as a tiger tears open
and devours its favourite flesh.

41 Viśvāmitra saw Śakti killed,
and began instigating Kalmāṣapāda
to kill and eat
the other sons of Vasiṣṭha.

42 Fiercely the rākṣasa-king
killed and ate all the sons
of Vasiṣṭha – Śakti's brothers –
as a lion devours small animals.

43 When Vasiṣṭha learnt
that Viśvāmitra had schemed
and got his sons killed, he bore his grief
as māhā-Meru bears the earth.

44 Finest of munis Vasiṣṭha,
best among intelligent men,
decided to sacrifice his life
rather than harm Kauśika-Viśvāmitra.

45 The bhagavān ṛṣi threw himself down
from Meru's summit –
but the stones on the ground
became to him like cottonwool.

46 Finding himself still alive,
the bhagavān ṛṣi kindled
a mahā-forest fire,
and stepped inside the blaze.

47 Flames crackled around him,
but would not singe him.
O great foe-chastiser,
the fire to him was like cool water.

48 Turning next to the ocean,
that mahā-muni tied a stone-slab
to his neck and flung himself
into its waters.

49 The ocean washed the mahā-muni
back to the shore.
The strict-vowed Brahmin returned to his aśrama,
depressed and disappointed.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

1 The aśrama, without his children,
no more pleased muni Vasiṣṭha
(continued the gandharva); sorrowing,
he left it again.

2 He came to a river,
swollen with monsoon rains,
its rushing waters flooding
the vegetation on its banks.

3 Seeing this, O Kaurava descendant Arjuna,
it occurred to grieving Vasiṣṭha
that if he jumped in those waters,
he would surely die.

4 The mahā-muni lashed his body
with strong ropes and,
still sorrowing, flung himself
into the turbulent river.

5 O great foe-vanquisher Arjuna,
the waters weakened the ropes,
freed him, and cast him safe
on land once again.

6 Finding himself free,
the mahā-ṛṣi rose
and named the river Vipāśā,
or "the Fetter-Freeing One".

7 Tormented by his suffering,
he could not find peace
in any one place.
He sought mountains, rivers, lakes.

8 He came to the Haimavatī,
    a frightening river
full of fierce creatures,
    and threw himself in its waters.

9 The river, afraid
    of his fire-like puissance,
fled in a hundred directions.
    From then on it was known
as Śatadru,
    or "The Hundred-Branching One".

10 Finding himself again
    on dry land, he said to himself,
I cannot even commit suicide!
    and returned to his āśrama.

11 On his way back,
    he crossed many high-hilled regions.
Following him
    was his daughter-in law Adṛśyatī.

12 As she came up, he heard
    the beautiful cadence
of lucidly-explained and recited Vedas
    in six graceful chanting modes.

13 "Who follows me?" he asked.
    "Your son Śakti's wife, Adṛśyatī,"
she replied. "I am an ascetic, O mahā-favoured one,
    my life is given to tapasyā."

14 "My daughter," asked Vasiṣṭha,
    "whose voice is this I heard,
exactly like Śakti's voice
    chanting the Vedas and their *aṅgas*?"

15 Adṛśyatī replied, "O muni!
In my womb is Śakti's child,
studying the Vedas for twelve years.
You heard his voice."

16 Excellently fortune-favoured ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
was pleased.
One of my own race, he kept murmuring,
and gave up the thought of suicide.

17 Accompanied by his daughter-in-law,
he returned to his āśrama.
One day he saw Kalmāṣapāda
in a secluded forest.

18 Immediately the rākṣasa-rājā
sprang up, as if incensed,
eager to devour
the muni Vasiṣṭha

19 Adṛśyanī spotted that creature
of cruel karma,
and turning trembling to Vasiṣṭha,
she said:

20 "Bhagavan, revered one, I see a rākṣasa
like Death with his rod
coming towards us armed
with a large wooden club.

21 Mahā-favoured one, O best of men
who are learned in the Vedas,
I do not think anyone
can stop him but you.

22 Bhagavan, revered one, save me
from this horrible creature!
Look, the rākṣasa rushes at us
to eat us up!"

23 "Control yourself, my daughter!"
said Vasiṣṭha.
"You need not fear any rākṣasa –
certainly not this one,

24 For he is Kalmāṣapāda,
famous in the three worlds
as a noble rājā. He lives here
changed into a fearful rākṣasa.

25 Then (continued the gandharva)
the bhagavan ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha,
seeing the rākṣasa rushing at them,
burst out with a "Huṁ!"

26 The rākṣasa stopped.
Vasiṣṭha sprinkled mantra-sanctified water
on him, and freed the king
from his curse

27 Like the sun by Rāhu in the distant past
during an eclipse,
so, twelve years later the rākṣasa was overcome
by Vasiṣṭha's radiant grandson.

28 The curse-freed monarch
shone in the forest
like the splendid sun
colouring the saṁdhyā sky.

29 Recovering his former self,
he performed *añjali*
before Vasiṣṭha with joined palms,
and said to that excellent ṛṣi:

30 "I am the son of Sudāsa,
O mahā-fortune-favoured muni!
I am now your yājya-follower.
Tell me what to do."

31 Vasiṣṭha only said, "O Indra-among-men!
I have got what I wanted.
Return to your kingdom.
Be respectful to Brahmins."

32 "O mahā-fortune-favoured one," replied the king,
"never again will I be
contemptuous to Brahmins.
I will honour them with pūjā-respect.

33 O finest of the twice-born,
greatest of Veda-knowers,
tell me how I can free myself
of my debt to my Ikṣvāku ancestors.

34 Grant me the boon to increase
the glory of the Ikṣvākus –
a son who will be handsome,
talented, noble-charactered."

35 Vasiṣṭha, dedicated to truth,
finest of Brahmins,
said to that bowman-rājā Kalmāṣapāda,
"I will give you such a son."

36 Some time after this,
Vasiṣṭha, accompanied by Kalmāṣapāda,
went to his capital,
world-famous Ayodhyā.

37 As gods do when Indra arrives,
the citizens rushed out
to welcome their fault-freed
mahā-ātmaned king.

38 The king and ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
made a grand entry
in that magnificent
and propitious capital.

39 Ayodhyā's citizens saw
their king alongside
his purohita Vasiṣṭha, who shone
like Divākara, the day-making sun.

40 The splendour of the king,
handsome-above-all-handsome-men,
irradiated Ayodhya, like moonlight
flooding the autumn sky.

41 And the king himself,
seeing the well-watered,
neatly-swept, flag-decorated
streets, was pleased.

42 O Kuru-descendant Arjuna!
Well-fed
Contented
Citizens –
Happy
City –
Like Śakra-Indra's
Amarāvati.

43 After the rājarṣi Kalmāṣapāda
had announced his presence,
he ordered his queen Madayantī devī
to go to Vasiṣṭha.

44 During her fertile period,
the mahā-ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha
had intercourse with her,
as enjoined by divine precept.

45 After the queen conceived,
Vasiṣṭha, best of munis,
taking the king's homage,
returned to his āśrama.

46 A long time passed.
No child was born.
The devī ripped open her womb
with a stone.

47 Thi is how after twelve years,
her son, a rājarṣi,
was born – he was founder
of the city called Paudanya –
he was called Aśmaka,
or "the Stone-Born".

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY

1 O rājā! Arjuna! (continued the gandharva),
Adṛśyantī's son,
continuer of Śakti's line, like a second Śakti,
was born in the āśrama.

2 Bhagavān Vasistha himself, O excellent Bhārata,
performed the *jātakarma* birth rituals
of his grandson,
Parāśara.

3 Muni Vasiṣṭha, bent on suicide,
refrained when he learnt
that a grandson was going
to be born; for this reason,
the boy was called Parāśara,
"the Destroyer or Transformer".

4 Dharmātmā Parāśara believed
from the moment of his birth
that Vasiṣṭha was his father,
and behaved accordingly.

5 O Kaunteya-Arjuna, the child,
in front of his mother Adṛśyantī
addressed Vasiṣṭha
as "*Tāta*" or "Father".

6 When Adṛśyantī heard
the affectionate word "*tāta*"
spoken so sweetly by her son,
she said to him, sadly:

7 "O my son, do not call
your father's father 'father'.
Your father was devoured
by a rākṣasa in a forest.

8 My little innocent one, he is not your father,
though you think it so.
This holy man is the father
of your illustrious father."

9 So grieved was mahā-minded Parāśara
by the truthful words of his mother
that he made up his mind
to destroy the whole universe.

10 Noticing this, Veda-wise,
mahā-tapasyā-observing Vasiṣṭha,
son of Mitrāvaruṇa, learned in skilled argument,
said to him:

11 "Once upon a time there lived
a great king called Kṛtavīrya.
That remarkable monarch
was a disciple of the learned Bhṛgus.

12 After the Soma sacrifice,
he pleased the first yajña-receivers,
Brahmins, with large offerings
of wealth and food.

13 The result was that when this tiger-among-kings
died and went to heaven,
his descendants, needing wealth,
approached the Bhārgavas.

14 They knew the Bhārgavas were rich:
so, disguised as beggars,
they went to the finest-of-men,
the Bhargavas.

15 Eager to save their indestructible wealth,
some Bhārgavas hid it underground.
Some, afraid of Kṣatriyas,
donated it to Brahmins.

16 Some among them, of course,
left with no other choice,
gave to the Kṣatriyas
as much wealth as they demanded.

17 *Tāta,* my dear one, one day, it so happened
that some Kṣatriyas,
quite accidentally, stumbled on hidden treasure
in a Bhārgava's house.

18 All the bull-brave Kṣatriyas assembled there
saw the treasure.
They were appalled!
Angrily they abused the Bhārgavas,

19 And slew them then and there with arrows,
though they begged for mercy.
Everywhere they went,
they killed the Bhārgavas, even unborn babies.

20 Terrified, the Bhārgava ladies fled
to the inaccessible regions
of the high Himālayas
for shelter.

21 One lovely-thighed lady,
in desperation,
incised a part of her thigh
and inserted a mahā-radiant womb there,

22 One of the Brahmin women
came to know of this
and, driven by fear,
reported it to the Kṣatriyas.

23 The Ksatriyas discovered her.
They planned to kill the foetus.
They saw the Brahmin lady,
radiant with rich light.

24 Ripping open her thigh,
the child sprang forth,
incandescent like the sun at noon,
blinding the Kṣatriyas.

25 Blinded, they lost their way
in those high hills.
In agony, they begged the Brahmin lady
to restore their sight.

26 Panic-stricken, woebegone,
they looked like snuffed-out fires.
Humbly they said
to the Brahmin lady:

27 'Bhāgavatī, gracious lady, grant us grace!
When our sight is restored, lovely lady,
we promise to go away
and take our ill deeds with us.

28 Be kind to us.
Advise your son to be kind to us!
Beautiful lady, give these princes
new sight and save them.'

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

1 To which the Brahminī replied:
'I have not taken your sight.
I am not angry with you.
This Bhārgava baby is angry.

2 This mahā-ātmaned child
has ruined your eyesight,
in revenge for the massacre
of his Bhārgava ancestors.

3 When you were all busy
annihilating foetuses,
I nourished this Bhārgava child
in my thigh for a hundred years.

4. The good of the Bhārgava race
is in this child's hands:
so the Vedas and Vedāṅgas
filled him in my thigh-womb.

5 He wants to kill you
because you slaughtered his ancestors –
his supernatural radiance
is responsible for your blindness.

6 Pray to him,
pray to my thigh-born son Aurva.
Your repentance may move him,
and your eyesight get restored.'

7 Immediately all the rājās
implored, *Be gracious, lord*!
And the thigh-born child
was moved by their prayers.

8 Because he was born
by tearing open his mother's thigh,
the three worlds celebrated him
as Aurva, 'the Thigh-Born.'

9 Eyesight recovered, the Kṣatriya kings
returned to their land;
and the Bhārgava descendant
resolved to ruin the world.

10 That mahā-minded child decided
to exterminate all creatures.
He wished to honour
the memory of his ancestors.

11 That descendant of Bhṛgu
began to practise
the severest tapasyā to make himself
the world-annihilator.

12 His tapasyā disturbed
the gods, anti-gods, and humans –
it was so severe and powerful
and single-minded;

13 His pitṛs, pleased with what
their mighty descendant was doing,
came to him from the pitṛ-regions,
and said:

14 'Aurva!
Our son,
Fierce
Is your tapasyā!
With our own eyes have we seen it!
Control
Your anger,
Be merciful
To the worlds.

15 Dear son!
Tāta!
Do not think
The great Brahmin Bhārgavas
Were unable
To defend themselves
Against
The butchering
Kṣatriyas.

16 We lived so long,
It was too long.
We were tired
Of living.
We wanted
The Kṣatriyas
To kill us.

17 The underground
Wealth
Of the Bhārgavas
Was placed
There
Specially
To incite
The Kṣatriyas.

18 O twice-born one!
Kubera
Lord of wealth
Gave us
More than enough.
What is wealth
To one
Who wants heaven?
Heaven's treasure
Suffices.

19 Realizing
Death
Could never kill
Us all together,
We chose
This way.

20 Dear child!
Tāta!
The man
Who commits suicide
Never gets heaven.
Suicide
Was not
For us.

21 Dear son, *tāta*!
Your intentions
Do not
Please us.
Control yourself.
Give up
The thought
Of the world's
Destruction.

22 Loved one!
Tāta!
Do not destroy
The Kṣatriyas,
Do not destroy
The seven worlds,
Dear son,
Destroy
Your anger.
It blots the glory of
Your tapasyā.'

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

1 'It is impossible. O pitṛs,'
replied Aurva,
'for the words of my angry vow
to be frustrated.

2 I am not one whose anger is empty,
whose curse is fruitless.
My anger unfulfilled will destruct me,
as fire consumes dry wood.

3 The man who suppresses
righteous anger
for whatever reason,
will find himself frustrated
in the three-fold path
of dharma, artha, and kāma.

4 The anger of kings
eager to dominate the world
has its uses – it deters the wicked,
and reassures the honest.

5 Lying in my mother's thigh,
I heard the piteous wails
of my mother and other Bhārgava ladies,
about to be slaughtered by the Kṣatriyas.

6 And terrible anger surged through me
when the scoundrelly Kṣatriyas
began their task
of murdering the living and to-be-born.

7 Who in the three worlds was there
to help all the pregnant mothers
at that fearful time?
Who helped the fathers?

8 When my mother found no one
to rescue the women –
not even one person! –
she hid me in her thigh.

9 Oh, if there was only someone
to punish the wicked,
would there be any wickedness left
in the world to punish?

10 When there is no one
to punish evil in the world,
the world becomes an ideal place
for evil-doers to flourish.

11 The man with power to punish
who does not punish
who he knows deserves punishment,
himself becomes guilty.

12 Many rājās and nobles
could have saved my ancestors –
yet they did not – they chose
riskless luxury instead.

13 But I – I have righteous anger
on my side!
I have the power to punish!
I don't have to obey you!

14 If I, who have power to punish,
do not now punish,
what is to prevent other men
from repeating the crime?

15 And if the heat of my anger
is now suppressed,
it will burst forth
in self-consuming energy, and kill me.

16 Noble fathers! You who seek
always the welfare of the worlds!
Instruct me now on what is good
for me and for the worlds.'

17 The pitṛs replied:
'Cast this
Passionate
World-consuming anger
Into the waters.
And be cleansed.
The worlds
Rest
On water.

18 Whatever
Has *rasa*
Is full
Of water.
The worlds
Are full
Of water.
O twice-born paragon!

19 We have heard
The worlds
Are made
Of water.
O Brahmin,
Cast your
Great anger
Into the ocean.
Consume
The ocean.

20 Defectless one,
In this way
Your vow
Will be kept,
But the worlds
And the gods
Will not
Be destroyed.'

21 Vasiṣṭha continued,
'Aurva threw his anger
into Varuṇa's kingdom,
and its fire consumed the mahā-ocean.

22 A huge horse-head formed
spitting flame;
it drinks the ocean's waters. Those who are wise
in the Vedas know this is so.

23 You, Parāśara, most learned
among learned men,
you know about the higher worlds –
May all go well with you.
How can *you* think
of destroying the world?'

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

1 As a result of mahā-ātmaned
Vasiṣṭha's words
(continued the gandharva), the twice-born-ṛṣi
suppressed his anger to destroy the worlds.

2 Instead, the mahā-radiant Parāśara,
Śakti's son,
greatest among knowers of the Vedas,
performed a great rākṣasa-sacrifice.

3 Mahā-muni Parāśara recalled the killing
of his father Śakti, and started
incinerating young and old rākṣasas
in the sacrifice he performed.

4 Vasiṣṭha did not like to obstruct
his grandson's second vow,
so he refrained from stopping
the rākṣasa-slaughter.

5 Mahā-muni Parāśara
at that sacrifice
of three blazing fires,
was himself a fourth fire.

6 Such was the śakti
of the libations offered at the auspicious yajña
that the sky become radiant,
like a cloud-free sun.

7 Vasiṣṭha and the other ṛṣis
looked upon Parāśara,
the self-lustrous ṛṣi,
as if he were a duplicate sun.

8 One day the pure-minded ṛṣi Atri
came there,
in the hope that he would be able
to stop the sacrifice.

9 O foe-chastising Arjuna!
Others who came with the same intention
were Pulastya, Pulaha,
Kratu and Mahākratu.

10 O bull-brave Bharata-Arjuna!
Pulastya saw that many rākṣasas
had already been killed
by foe-destroying Parāśara, so he said:

11 "*Tāta*! Your sacrifice goes smoothly,
I trust? What pleasure
do you get, my son,
in killing these rākṣasas
who are in no way responsible
for your father's death?

12 *Tāta*! Dear one! Do you really think
you should kill my progeny
in this way? This is not the dharma
of a Brahmin of tapasyā.

13 Nothing excels serenity, O Parāśara.
Cultivate serenity.
A man of dharma like you
should not practise adharma.

14 Your father Śakti knew all
about dharma.
What would he think of your behaviour?
Do not kill my progeny.

15 What happened to your father Śaktī
was the result of his own curse.
It was his own fault
he died as he did.

16 No rākṣasa, O muni,
could have devoured him
if he had not done
what he did.

17 Viśvāmitra was merely
an agent in the affair,
like rājā Kalmāṣapāda.
Śakti is now happy in heaven.

18 O mahā-muni! He and Vasiṣṭha's other sons
are all in heaven,
where they enjoy themselves
even as the gods do.

19 O mahā-muni! Your father Vasiṣṭha
knows all this. Child,
grandson of Vasiṣṭha,
you are being used

20 In this sacrifice as a tool
for the extermination
of these rākṣasas.
Stop this sacrifice.
May you be blessed, my child.
Stop it now."

21 After Pulastya and wise Vasiṣṭha
had advised him,
Śakti's son mahā-muni Parāśara
ended the sacrifice.

22 He flung the huge fire
of the sacrifice
into the mahā-forests
of the northern Himavant.

23 That conflagration can be seen there
even today,
devouring, at all seasons,
rakṣasas, trees, and stones.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

1 Arjuna asked the gandharva,
"Why did rājā Kalmāṣapāda
order his queen to have *niyoga* relations
with mighty Vasiṣṭha?

2 And why did the mahātmā ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha,
well versed in all rules of dharma,
agree to intercourse
with another's wife?

3 *Sakhe*! My loved and loving friend!
Why did he do this adharma?
I ask this because I do not know.
Please enlighten me."

4 Unconquerable hero Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
(replied the gandharva)
Listen carefully while I explain
about Vasiṣṭha and rājā Mitrasaha.

5 I have already told you,
O finest of the Bharatas,
how Kalmāṣapāda was cursed
by Vasiṣṭha's mahā-ātmaned son Śakti.

6 Under the curse's influence,
that foe-smiting rājā,
his eyes rolling in anger,
with his wife left the city,

7 And went to a forest,
where he wandered aimlessly.
The great forest reverberated
with the weird noises

8 Of many animals;
huge trees rose high,
creepers entwined them,
everywhere was lush vegetation.

9 One day, faint with hunger,
he went out in search
of something to eat.
In a secluded corner of the forest,

10 He stumbled on a Brahmin and Brahmini
about to have intercourse.
They saw him,
and fled.

11 The king ran after them,
and caught hold of the Brahmin.
The Brahminī saw her husband
forcibly seized, and said:

12 "O rājā! Listen to me!
You are a strict-vowed man.
All the world knows you belong
to the dynasty of the sun.

13 Your deeds are deeds of dharma.
You are attentive to gurus.
O daring hero! Though you are cursed,
you should not commit this crime.

14 I have sought my husband repeatedly
during my fertile period.
How often have I tried –
yet I have not conceived.

15 I beg of you, therefore, O finest of kings,
let my husband go free!"
She kept lamenting and pleading,
but the king

16 Fell on her husband like a lion on a deer,
and devoured him.
The tears that dropped from her eyes
in her helpless condition

17 Ignited into a roaring blaze
that consumed everything in sight.
Still lamenting the death of her husband,
she cursed the rājarṣi Kalmāṣapāda

18 In a fury of anger: "You scoundrel!
May you be cursed!
Today you devoured my husband
in front of my eyes! –

19 *My mahā-illustrious, my darling husband! –*
before he could satisfy my desire!
I curse you
to die the instant

20 *You have intercourse with your wife*
in her fertile period.
Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha,
whose son you devoured,

21 *Will have intercourse with your wife*
and give her a son.
Despicable king!
That son will continue your race.

22 After cursing the rājā,
that lady of the Aṅgirasa race
stepped into the blazing sati fire
in front of his eyes.

23 O great foe-smitter! Arjuna!
Mahā-fortune-favoured Vasiṣṭha
got to know all this
by means of tapasyā and jñāna-yoga.

24 A long time passed,
and the curse left the rājarṣi Kalmāṣapāda.
He sought his wife Madayantī
for intercourse, but she refused.

25 Desire had so overpowered him
that he had forgotten the curse.
Listening to his wife,
Devī Madayantī, he was deeply troubled.

26 He recalled the curse,
and was filled with remorse.
That is why rājā Kalmāṣapāda asked Vasiṣṭha
to have *niyoga*-intercourse with his wife

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

1 "Gandharva," Arjuna said,
"you seem to know everything.
Tell us, what Veda-wise Brahmin
is fittest to be our purohita?"

2 In this forest (replied the gandharva),
is a tirtha named Utkocaka.
Ṛṣi Devala's younger brother Dhaumya
is engaged there in tapasyā.
Go to that place of pilgrimage –
make him your purohita.

3 Arjuna was greatly pleased
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and, ceremonially handing over
his Āgneya-missile, he said:

4 "O finest of gandharvas!
Keep your horses with you
until such time as we want them.
May you be blessed."

5 The gandharva and the Pāṇḍavas,
respectfully taking mutual leave,
left the soothing banks of the Bhāgirathī,
and went their ways.

6 In course of time,
they came to the āśrama of Dhaumya
in Utkocaka-tīrtha,
and appointed him their purohita.

7 Dhaumya, greatest among Veda-knowers,
offered them the hospitality
of wild fruits and roots,
and agreed

8 To be their purohita.
Along with their mother,
the party of six were now convinced
that Pāñcālī-Draupadī

9 Was as good as won in the svayaṁvara,
their kingdom as good as regained.
With Dhaumya as their purohita,
they had the finest protector.

10 Guru Dhaumya had plumbed
the secrets of the Vedas,
he was large-minded, he was dedicated
to the welfare of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.

11 When he saw them strong,
brave, intelligent, persevering,
he felt their sva-dharma
would win them back their kingdom.

12 He blessed them with many benedictions.
After which,
the royal heroes proceeded
to the svayaṁvara in Pāñcāla.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX

1 The five Pāṇḍava brothers
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
went to the land of the Pāñcālas,
to Draupadī and her *mahotsava*.

2 On their way, the foe-crushing heroes
and their mother
saw a group of Brahmins travelling
in the same direction.

3 Those Brahmins, who were brahmacārīs,
asked them,
"Where are you going?
From where have you come?"

4 Yudhiṣṭhira replied,
"O bull-brave Brahmins!
We are five brothers, with our mother,
coming from Ekacakra."

5 The Brahmin said:
"We advise you to hurry
to the kingdom of Drupada, Pāñcāla.
A mahā-svayaṁvara will be held there,
much money spent.

6 We are going there,
so let us all go together.
Marvellous feats will take place
in the marvellous *mahotsava* there.

7 Mahā-ātmaned Yajñasena-Drupada's daughter,
a lotus-leaf-eyed lady,
was born, we have heard,
from the yajña-altar;

8 With a flawless figure,
lovely to look at and strong-minded;
she is the sister of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
who is Droṇa's enemy.

9 And mahā-muscled Dhṛṣṭadyumana, we are told,
rose from the yajña-fire,
like a second splendid fire,
with skin-armour, sword, bow and arrows.

10 His sister, slim-waisted,
perfect-featured Draupadī's body
breathes lotus-fragrance
for one full *krośa* around her.

11 Yajñasena-Drupada's daughter will choose
a husband in that svayaṁvara,
and we are going to see her
and enjoy the marvellous festivities.

12 Many rājās and many princes,
great yajña-performers,
great dakṣiṇā-givers, pure-minded,
strict-vowed, study-devoted mahātmās,

13 Young, handsome, unrivalled
mahā-chariot-heroes, and skilled
wielders of war-weapons, will come there
from innumerable kingdoms.

14 And because each hopes to succeed,
they will lavish gifts
of wealth, cattle, food,
and countless other luxuries,

15 Which we will be happy to receive.
Happy with the svayaṁvara,
happy with the revels,
we will then leave.

16 Actors, praise-reciters, dancers,
chanters of the Purāṇas,
panegyrists, conjurors and wrestlers,
will come from many lands.

17 Come with us, O mahā-ātmaned ones!
Enjoy the spectacle,
take what is given,
and then you can return with us.

18 You are handsome, you are god-like.
Who knows, seeing you,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī may prefer one of you
for herself!

19 This brother of yours looks specially
handsome and heart-pleasing;
he is mighty-muscled,
and in feats of strength will do well."

20 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"So be it, together we go.
We will accompany you
to this girl's svayaṁvara-festival."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 In this way, O Janamejaya
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas undertook the journey
to Pāñcāla's rājā Drupada's capital.

2 On their way they met
the truly mahā-ātmaned, pure-ātmaned,
absolutely free-from-imperfection
muni Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.

3 He greeted them, and they
honoured him – they exchanged
a few words – he told them
to proceed to Drupada's capital.

4 The mahā-chariot-heroes moved
at a leisurely pace,
stopping frequently to admire
entrancing forests and lakes.

5 And in course of time,
the sweet-speaking, studious,
pure-acting sons of Pāṇḍu
arrived in the Pāñcāla kingdom.

6 The Pāṇḍavas explored the capital,
and the residential quarters,
and decided to stay
in a potter's house.

7 They posed as Brahmins,
begging for alms-food each day.
No one was able to pierce
through their disguise.

8 Yajñasena-Drupada's fondest desire
was to marry his daughter Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
but he divulged this to nobody.

9 With Kaunteya-Arjuna in mind,
he ordered an adamantine bow
to be fashioned, which none
could bend but Arjuna.

10 Rājā Drupada also ordered a contraption
to be suspended high up,
and in the middle of this gadget
was the target to be pierced.

11 Drupada's conditions were:
The man who bends this bow
and hits the target with these arrows,
will win my daughter Draupadī.

12 With these words the svayaṁvara
was declared open by rājā Drupada.
O Janamejāya, all the royalty of the world
was present there.

13 Also present were māhā-ātmaned ṛṣis,
come to watch the svayaṁvara.
Duryodhana and other Kauravas,
along with Karṇa, also came.

14 Also, mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmins
from many lands. Mahā-minded Drupada
greeted each guest with exceeding courtesy,
in the customary manner.

15 And the crowds of citizens,
talking among themselves
like a noisy ocean, took their seats
on the svayaṁvara daises.

16 Kings and princes were admitted
by the north-east gate.
The site of the svayaṁvara
was an elevation in the north-east

17 Section of the capital.
The enclosure itself was canopied,
walled, and moated,
and had exquisite gates and arches.

18 Hundreds of wind-instruments blew;
aloe scant filled the air;
garlands adorned the walls;
sandalpaste water

19 Was sprinkled all around.
On all sides high,
white mansions rose
like the sky-kissing peaks of Kailāsa.

20 Gold filigree work on the windows;
diamond and gem-studded walls;
lush carpets and wall-hangings;
smooth-climbing stairs –

21 All fragrant with aloe-scent;
all decorated with garlands;
white like swans' necks;
sweet-smelling for one *yojana*.

22 Each mansion had a hundred doors,
each wide enough to admit a crowd;
lavish metal-cast beds in it –
it looked like a Himalayan hill.

23 In these mansions
were accommodated the kings
(who came resplendent with ornaments),
each hopeful of winning Draupadī.

24 When those puissant monarchs,
pure-minded, munificent,
smeared with fragrant aloe-paste,
devoted to Brahmins,

25 Honoured in the three worlds
for their deeds of goodness,
protectors of their kingdoms,
when they took their seats,

26 The citizens of Pāñcāla and others,
who had all come to see Kṛṣṇa-Draupadī
and were already seated,
stared at them.

27 The Pāṇḍavas sat in the pavilion
along with their Brahmin companions,
and marvelled
at Pāñcāla splendour.

28 That crowd of visitors had swelled
over many days, and now sparkled
with actors and dancers.
Lavish gifts of gems were made.

29 On the sixteenth day, the enchanting event!
Draupadī, bathed and dressed
in the finest robes, wearing
the most exquisite ornaments,

30 Entered the svayaṁvara enclosure,
carrying in one hand
a golden plate containing a flower garland
and other offerings.

31 The purohita of the Somakas, the lunar dynasty
of the Pāñcālas, a mantra-learned
Brahmin, lit the sacred fire
and poured in it ghee-libations.

32 He gratified Agni and invoked
the blessings of assembled Brahmins;
Then he ordered all musical instruments
to stop playing.

33 When perfect silence prevailed
in the enclosure, Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
whose voice was like that
of a kettledrum or a cloud,

34 Took hold of his sister's arm,
and, standing in the middle
of the amphitheatre, announced
in sweet-sounding, cloud-echoing words:

35 "Hear me, O kings!
Here is the bow!
Here is the target!
The test: with these arrows
Hit the target through
The hole in the machine.

36 And I give my word –
The noble-born,
Handsome and strong
King who succeeds
Today takes to wife
My sister Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī."

37 After this (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Drupada's son turned to his sister,
and enumerated the names, *gotras* and feats
of the royal competitors.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 Dhṛṣṭadyumna said:
"Duryodhana, Durviṣaha, Durmukha,
Duṣpradharśana, Viviṁṣati,
Vikarṇa, Saha, Duḥśāsana;

2 Yuyutsu, Vāyuvega, Bhīmavegarava,
Ugrāyudha, Balāki, Karakāyu, Virocana;

3 Kuṇḍaka, Citrasena, Suvarcas, Kanakadhvaja,
Nandaka, Bāhuśāli, Tuhuṇḍa, Vikaṭa –

4 These and other maha-powerful sons of
Dhṛtarāṣṭra
Have come with Karṇa hoping to win you.

5 Many other kings – mahā-ātmaned bull-brave
Kṣatriyas –
Subala's son Śakuni, Vṛṣaka, Bṛhadbala –

6 These are all sons of the rājā of Gāndhāra.
The finest of arms-wielders, Aśvatthāman and
Bhoja,

7 Have arrived, resplendent with every ornament.
Other kings, Bṛhanta, Maṇimān, Daṇḍadhāra,

8 Sahadeva, Jayatsena, Meghasaṁdhi,
Virāṭa and both his sons, Śaṅkha and Uttara,

9 Vṛddhakṣema's son Suśarmā, Senabindu,
Suketu and his sons Suvarcas and Sunāmnā;

10 Sucitra, Sukumāra, Vṛka, Satyadhṛti,
Sūryadhvaja, Rocamāna, Nīla, Citrāyudha;

11 Aṁśumān, Cekitāna, mahā-powerful Śreṇimān,
Samudrasena's illustrious son Candrasena;

12 Jalasaṁdha, Vidaṇḍa and his son Daṇḍa,
Pauṇḍraka, Vāsudeva, heroic Bhagadatta;

13 Kaliñganareśa, Tāmraliptanareśa, the king of Pāṭana.
Śalya, the māha-chariot-hero king Bhadra,

14 And his two sons, Rukmāṅgada and Rukmaratha:
Somadatta of the Kuru dyuasty and his three sons,

15 Bhūri, Bhūrisravas, and Śala;
Sudakṣiṇa of Kāmboja, and Dṛḍhadhanvas of the Purus;

16 Mighty Śuṣena, Śibi of the Uśīnaras,
And Kārusādhipati, subduer of criminals;

17 Saṁkarṣana, Vāsudeva-Krishna, Rukmiṇī's brave son Pradyumna,
Sāmba, Cārudeṣṇa, the son of Pradyumna – Aniruddha –

18 Akrūra, Sātyaki, mahā-minded Uddhava,
Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman, Pṛthu, Vipṛthu;

19 Vidūratha, Kaṅka, Śaṅku, Gaveṣaṇa,
Āśāvaha, Aniruddha, Śamika, Sārimejaya;

20 Heroic Vātapati, Jhillīpiṇḍaraka,
Uśīnara – these are all of the Vṛṣṇi race;

21 Bhagīratha's Bṛhatkṣatra, Sindhu's Jayadratha,
Bṛhadratha, Bāhlika, the chariot-hero Śrutāyus;

22 Ulūka, Kaitava, Citrāṅgada, Śubhāṅgada,
Intelligent Vatsarāja, the king of Kosala;

23 Heroic Śiśupāla, and mighty Jarāsaṁdha –
These and other great kings, from many lands,

24 And other Kṣatriyas from all parts of the world,
Have gathered here, my sister, for your hand.

25 They will aim at the target.
Gracious girl! The hero who hits
The target you will choose as your husband."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
They wore ear-rings, the young princess,
and boasted loudly,
brandishing their weapons,
each thinking himself the best,
each confident of victory.

2 They were like the elephants of Himavat
in the rutting season;
drunk with the glory of lineage,
wealth, youth, skill, and handsomeness.

3 They looked with envious eyes
at each other; swaying
with desire, they stood up often,
shouting "Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī is mine!"

4 Like the gods around Umā,
daughter of the mountain-rājā,
were these Kṣatriyas,
eager to win Drupada's daughter.

5 Smitten by the arrows of Kandarpa
the god of lust,
they entered the arena;
friend bore friend secret jealousy.

6 The gods came in chariots,
with the Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sādhyas,
the twin Aśvins and the Maruts,
led by Dhaneśvara-Kubera and Yama;

7 The Daityas, Suparṇas, mahā-*uragas,*
devarṣis, Guhyakas, Cāraṇas,
Viśvāvasu, Nārada, Parvata,
the gandharvas and apsarās,

8 Halāyudha, Janārdana-Krishna,
the chiefs of the Vṛṣṇis,
Andhaka and Yādava tribes –
followers of Krishna – were there.

9 Krishna spotted the five Pāṇḍavas
like five splendid rutting elephants,
the finest of the herd,
beside a lotus-filled lake,
or like flames suppressed in ashes,
and he began to think deeply.

10 He said to Balarāma;
"That is Yudhiṣṭhira;
that is Bhīma, that Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
and there the twin heroes."
Balarāma looked around slowly,
and smiled at Janārdana-Krishna.

11 Fiercely biting their lower lips,
the mighty sons and grandsons of kings,
thinking only of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
kept looking at Draupadī,
with large wide eyes,
and did not notice the Pāṇḍavas.

12 When they saw Draupadī,
the brave sons of Pṛthā-Kunti
and the twins were pierced with the arrows
of the god of passion Kandarpa.

13 The place was crowded
with celestial ṛṣis, gandharvas, Suparṇas,
Nāgas, Siddhas, anti-gods;
heavenly flower-scents filled the air;

14 Booming tabors and kettledrums;
murmur of many voices;
soft melody of flute and vīṇā-and paṇava-drums
these sounds filled the air.

15 Then the suitors one after another
recounted their exploits –
Karṇa, Duryodhana, Śālva, Śalya,
Aśvatthāman, Krātha, Sunītha, Makra,

16 The kings of Kaliṅga, Baṅga,
and Pāṇḍva, the rulers
of Pauṇḍra, Videha, and Yavana;
and many others, lotus-eyed

17 Sons and grandsons of monarchs –
wearing a variety
crowns, garlands, armlets,
brave, virile, and unconquered.

18 Just the thought of bending that bow
discouraged some.
Some tried – biting lip and straining muscle –
to string it.

19 And fell back, panting,
dishevelled, their confidence sapped;
in despair, they retired,
uttering cries of woe.

20 Their garlands, crowns, and armlets
were all awry, their finery disordered,
their hopes of obtaining
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī to wife shattered,
they broke into loud lamentations
of "Hai! Hai!"

21 Karṇa saw them gasping, defeated;
he rose, strode to the bow,
and swiftly picked it up,
and strung it.

22 Seeing the son of the Sun,
Karṇa of the Sūtas –
fire-sun-and-moon-radiant –
ready to shoot at the target,
the five Pāṇḍavas feared
the target as good as pierced.

23 Draupadī saw him too
and said in a loud voice:
"No Sūta will marry me."
Karna smiled bitterly.
He glanced up at the sun,
and flung aside the bow.

24 When all the great Ksatriyas
retired defeated one by one,
the stalwart, powerful-as-Antaka
king of the Cedis,

25 Mahā-minded son of Damaghoṣa,
Śiśupāla, rose,
and tried lifting the bow,
but collapsed on his knees.

26 Mahā-brave and mahā-powerful rājā
Jarasaṁdha was next:
he stood before the bow,
immobile like a mountain.

27 As soon as he tried to lift it,
his knees gave way,
and he fell. The rājā rose,
and went back to his kingdom.

28 Next was Śalya, the mahā-brave
and mahā-powerful rājā of Madra,
who fared no better.
His knees weakened, and he fell.

29 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, rājā Duryodhana,
great foe-subduer,
rose from the midst of his brothers.
He carried formidable weapons.

30 His confidence in his mahā-strength
gave him even more strength.
He looked at Draupadī,
and desire stirred in him.

31 He approached the bow.
His hands gripped it firmly.
At that moment he shone
like Śakra-Indra himself.

32 He jerked the bow up.
His fingers seemed to violently
break free. He fell.
Ashamed, he retired to his seat.

33 Seeing this, Krishna,
admired by the gods and Danavas,
chief of the Vṛṣṇis, –
Krishna pressed the hand of Balarāma,
and was convinced Draupadī
was now in Arjuna's hands.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY

1 None of the rājās was willing to contend
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Then Arjuna rose
from among the Brahmins.

2 Straight like Indra's flag-staff he rose,
and strode towards the bow.
The Brahmins noisily
flapped their deerskins.

3 Some were pleased,
others did not hide their displeasure.
The intelligent
among them whispered:

4 *How can this boy of a Brahmin,*
untrained in arms,
lift the bow when
world-renowned Kṣatriyas like Karṇa, Śalya

5 *And many others*
possessing superhuman strength,
and skilled in the use of weapons,
have failed?

6 *This foolish boy will bring ridicule and shame*
on us Brahmins –
what will the kings
think of us?

7 *He's headstrong, proud,*
and impulsive. What other reason
can he have for doing what
he is doing? – Stop him!

8 Others whispered back:
No, no, we won't be shamed.
No one will laugh at us,
not any of these kings.

9 Still other whispered:
He's handsome, and strong
like an elephant's trunk –
look at his shoulders, arms, thighs! –
Sa muscular! – he's firm
like a Himavant hill!

10 *His gait is like a lion's,*
his energy like a rutting elephant's –
he looks determined –
he is the kind who succeeds.

11 *He must be sure*
of his śakti and ability,
or why would he even try?
In there anything in the world

12 *Brahmins can't accomplish?*
They give up food and drink,
live on air and wild fruits,
practise rigorous penance,

13 *Are reduced to skin-and-bones,*
and yet are self-radiant.
Never underestimate a Brahmin –
whether right or wrong –

14 *Whether his action*
be small or great,
whether bliss-giving or woe-creating.
There is none here who knows

15 *Bowcraft, physical skill, the Vedas*
and Yogas so well
as Brahmins do – no, none
in the whole world.

16 *The best Brahmins,*
by strength of mind and mantra,
have subdued kingdoms. Jamadagni-Paraśurāma
defeated all the Kṣatriyas;

17 *Agastya, with his Brāhma-powers,*
drank up the ocean.
Let us rather bless him
and hope he will bend the bow.

18 The other Brahmins agreed,
saying, *You are right.*
They continued
to whisper among themselves.

19 Arjuna approached the bow.
He stood in front of it,
like a straight mountain. He circumambulated it,
in respectful *pradakṣiṇa*,

20 *Praṇāmaed* his head in homage
to Iṣāna, supreme lord;
he thought of Krishna,
and he lifted the bow.

21 The bow which Rukma, Sunītha,
Vakra, Rādhā's son Karṇa, Duryodhana,
Śalya and others failed to lift,
was picked up in a flash

22 By Arjuna, son of Indra,
Arjuna, most powerful of mortals,
who was like Viṣṇu, Indra's own younger brother.
He strung five arrows,

23 Shot them at the target
which, pierced, slipped through the hole
in the contraption above
where it was suspended.

24 A deafening cacophony
of applause burst forth
in the sky, and shouts resounded
in the pavilion.

25 The gods showered celestial flowers
on the head
of the great foe-slayer Pārtha-Arjuna.
Brahmins waved their upper garments.

26 The assembled kings burst
into groans of "Hai! Hai!"
Flowers fell from the sky
in clusters on the arena.

27 The musicians began playing
hundreds of drums and trumpets
in chorus. Bards and *sūtas*
sweetly chanted songs of praise.

28 Foe-crushing Drupada was so pleased
with the feat of Arjuna
that he decided to give him
his army's support if needed.

29 At the height of the confusion,
dharma-wise Yudhiṣṭhira, accompanied
by the twin paragons Nakula and Sahadeva,
slipped out of the enclosure.

30 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī saw the target pierced,
saw that Arjuna had pierced it,
saw him like a second Śakra-Indra,
and was suffused with joy;
smiling she came towards Kuntī's son
with a garland of white flowers.

31 And those who had seen her
repeatedly, saw her again
as if never seen before:
without smiling, she seemed to smile;
she radiated feeling; her way of walking
was a way of speaking.

32 She approached Arjuna,
not once looking at the suitors,
placed the garland round his neck,
and stood near him, modestly.

33 As Śacī before Devendra-Indra,
Svāhā before Agni,
Lakṣmī before Mukunda-Viṣṇu,
Uṣā before Sūrya,
Ratī before Madana-Kāma,
The mountain-princess Pārvatī
before Maheśvara-Śiva,
Maithila-rāja-putrī Śītā before Rāma,
and the Bhīma princess Damayantī before Nala,
was Draupadī before Arjuna.

34 Incomparably-brilliant Arjuna,
praised by the Brahmins,
left the pavilion soon after,
taking his bride with him.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-ONE

1 When king Drupada announced
the marriage of his daughter
to that Brahmin (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the kings angrily protested.

2 "He ignores us and the chiefs
as if we are bits of straw!
And he gives his lovely daughter Draupadī
to a Brahmin!

3 First he plants a tree –
then, when it's about to bear fruit,
he cuts it down!
Insolent wretch – we'll kill him!

4 Why should we respect him for his age?
His conduct is unbearable!
– he insults kings and princes –
Kill him!

5 First he invites kings,
then he feasts them royally,
and then
he insults them!

6 Can't he find even one among
this galaxy of god-like-rājās
who deserves
his dear daughter?

7 According to *śruti*,
a svayaṁvara is only
for Kṣatriyas –
Brahmins cannot be suitors.

8 If this girl does not think
any of us fit for her,
let's throw her in the fire,
and return to our kingdoms!

9 There's no point harming the Brahmin
– he is cunning and greedy –
let it pass –
we won't kill him.

10 After all, our kingdoms,
our wealth, lives, sons, grandsons,
whatever we have,
are all dependent on Brahmins.

11 But the disgrace of it!
We must safeguard
our sva-dharma!
We must do something!
For if we do not,
other svayaṁvaras will suffer."

12 Saying this, those lion-like rājās
rushed at Drupada,
with the intention of killing him
with their sharp and fierce weapons.

13 Seeing them charging in a body
towards him, Drupada,
out of fear, sought the protection
of the assembled Brahmins.

14 Bhīma and Arjuna,
finest of bowmen, famed foe-smiters,
strode out to oppose
the infuriated elephant-like attacks

15 Lifting their weapons,
the kings ran towards the two Kuru princes;
their fingers were encased
in leather-protectors.

16 Mahā-muscled, fearful-feated Bhīma,
like an elephant,with thunder-like energy,
uprooted a tree with his bare hands,
and stripped its branches.

17 Holding the trunk, strong-armed Bhīma,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, foe-chastiser,
stood like the rājā of pitṛs,
Yama with his rod, near bull-brave Arjuna.

18 Even Jiṣṇu-Arjuna was awe-struck
by his brother's action.
He stood firm, like Mahendra-Indra,
fearless, ready with bow and arrows.

19 Watching the strength and bravery
of both brothers, Damodara-Krishna
said to his fearful-feated brother,
Hatāyudha-Balarāma:

20 "Saṁkarṣaṇa, that lion-gaited hero
with a *talā*-tall height
is surely Arjuna,
the mahā bow-wielder.
My name is not Vāsudeva-Krishna
if I am wrong in this.

21 And that tree-uprooting hero,
ready in a flash
to repulse the rājās,
must be wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhima,
Who else could have done
what he did today?

22 And the third, O Acyūta-Balarāma,
with eyes like lotus-leaves
and the walk of a lion,
slim, fair-skinned, gentle-looking,
long-noised, who left a little while ago,
is Dharmaputra-Yudhiṣṭhira

23 The two other young men,
each as handsome as Kārtikeya,
I am certain
are the twin Aśvins.
I have heard that Pāṇḍu's sons and Pṛthā-Kuntī
escaped from the lacquer-fire."

24 Hearing the kings express their anger
at Arjuna's prowess,
finest-of-men Puruṣottama-Krishna turned
to Halāyudha-Balarāma and said:

25 "There is nothing to worry about.
Even if many gods and anti-gods
joined hands, Arjuna
could match them single-handed.

26 Easy enough to vanquish these mortal kings!
If ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
needs help, we will help.
I think he is invincible."

27 Krishna's elder brother
rainless-cloud-skinned-Halāyudha-Balarāma,
replied joyfully, "It is good to know
that our father's sister Kuntī
and her five Pāṇḍavas
all escaped from the lac-house."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-TWO

1 The bull-brave Brahmins (continued Vaiśampāyana),
waved their deerskins
and hollow coconut bowls
and shouted, "We'll fight too!"

2 Arjuna smiled and said to them,
"No, stand aside.
You will be present here
only as spectators.

3 It is my joy to stop
these kings with hundreds of sharp arrows,
as snakes are neutralised
by the power of mantras."

4. Mahā-powerful-Arjuna lifted
the svayaṁvara bow
and, with Bhīma at his side,
stood firm as a mountain.

5 When the Kṣatriyas,
led by Karṇa, attacked,
the two brothers counter-charged,
like two elephants
forcing their way
through a herd of hostile elephants.

6 The excited rājās spoiling
for a fight, shouted,
"Kill him! Killing a Brahmin
who wants to fight is permitted!"

7 Saying this the rājās rushed
in a body, and maha-radiant Karṇa
chose Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
for individual combat.

8 The king of Madra, Śalya,
drove against Bhīma
like one elephant against another
fighting over a she-elephant.

9 Duryodhana and others
fought the Brahmins –
taking care, however,
not to hurt them overmuch.

10 Arjuna, seeing Karṇa rush
upon him, strung his bow
and quickly shot a volley of arrows
at Vikartana's son Karṇa.

11 Rādhā's son Karṇa,
bewildered by the swift,
piercing, dazzling arrows,
advanced slowly towards Arjuna.

12 Karṇa and Arjuna,
both mighty warriors, battled on.
Their skilful arrow-showers
screened them from sight.

13 "Look, I block your shaft!"
"Look at my mighty arms!"
They hurled challenges at each other,
as heroes do.

14 Vaikartana-Karṇa, enraged when he realised
Arjuna's arms-prowess
as second to none,
fought with even more passion.

15 He evaded all the sharp,
swift arrows shot by Arjuna,
and shouted loudly.
The warriors cheered him noisily.

16 "Brilliant Brahmin," Karṇa said,
"you impress me
with your ceaseless skill in arms.
You deserve to win.

17 You seen to be Bowcraft itself!
Or are you Paraśurāma,
or Harihaya-Indra?
Or Viṣṇu as Acyuta the Undeteriorating One?

18 Have you came disguised
as a Brahmin
after mastering the science of arms
in order to defeat me?

19 None except Śacī's husband Indra
or Pāṇḍu's son
Kirīṭīn-Arjuna can equal me
when I am roused to battle."

20 Answering Karṇa,
Phālguna-Arjuna replied, "Karṇa,
I am not Bowcraft personified.
I am not illustrious Paraśurāma.

21 I am just a Brahmin who excels all warriors
and knows all about weapons.
My guru taught me
the Brāhma and Pauraṁdara weapons.
I stand here to defeat you.
Brave hero! Don't run away!"

22 But when Karṇa heard this,
he refused to fight.
The mahā-chariot-hero knew
a Brahmin's radiance was invincible.

23 In another part of the arena,
Śalya and Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
both magnificently strong
and skilled in war-weapons

24 Hurled defiance
at each other, and battled
like two mahā musth-elephants,
using knees and bare fists.

25 Pushing, dragging, throwing
each other down,
pressing faces and thighs in the dust,
they boxed, hitting with

26 Fists as hard as stones
that sounded *caṭ caṭ*.
The enclosure reverberated
with their thudding blows.

27 After a while, finest-of-Kauravas Bhīma
lifted Salya with both hands,
and flung him violently
down on the ground. The Brahmins laughed.

28 Amazing!
Bhīma's skill was such
that though Śalya fell hard,
he was not killed.

29 With Śalya humilated,
and Karṇa petrified,
the other rājās, awe-struck,
surrounded wolf-waisted Bhīma,

30 Saying, "These two Brahmins
are the finest of warriors.
Where do they come from?
In which family were they born?

31 Who can dare to fight
Karṇa, son of Rādhā,
except Paraśurāma, Droṇa,
or Pāṇḍu's son Kirīṭin-Arjuna?

32 Who can dare to fight Duryodhana
except Krishna,
son of Devakī,
or Kṛpa, son of Śaradvat?

33 Who can humble Madra's king Śalya
in duel except Baladeva-Balarāma?
Or brave Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
son of Pāṇḍu,

34 Or Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself?
There is no point fighting
these Brahmins. Let us stop.

35 Brahmins, even if guilty,
need to be protected.
Let us find out who they are.
Then, if we must, let us fight."

36 Krishna witnessed the feat,
and knew they must be Kuntī's sons.
Gently he dissuaded the kings –
"She has been won by dharma."

37 Persuaded from fighting,
all the excellent rājās, mighty heroes,
bewildered by the turn of events,
returned to their kingdoms.

38 The assembly in the pavilion
departed, thinking the day
had been won by Brahmins with
the Pāñcāla princess a Brahmin bride.

39 It was with great difficulty
that Bhīma and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
pushed a passage through the crowd
of *ruru*-deer-skin-dressed Brahmins.

40 When the two encircled heroes emerged,
followed by Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
they looked like the full moon
and the sun

41 Breaking through eloud-masses.
Their mother Kuntī at home
was getting anxious
about what misfortune befell them

42 They were so late returning from
their alms-rounds;
for a moment she thought Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
had recognised and killed them –

43 Or did some revengeful rākṣasas trick them
with māyā and devour them?
She thought: *Have the words
of mahātma Vyāsa proved to be wrong?*

44 Even as these feelings revolved
in her heart, brimming with tenderness
for her children, clouds formed
in the afternoon sky.

45 Blotting the sun, and deep silence
suddenly prevailed.
At that time, Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
surrounded by Brahmins,
like the sun by clouds,
entered the potter's house.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-THREE

1 The two sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī, entering
the potter's house shouted,
referring to Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
"Mother, we bring alms!"

2 Kunti was inside;
she did not see them; she replied,
"Share and enjoy your alms."
She turned, saw Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and worriedly exclaimed:
"What have I said?"

3 Afraid of adharma attaching to her,
and anxious to save the situation,
she took Yājñasanī-Draupadī by the hand
to Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 "This is rājā Drupada's daughter,"
said Kuntī.
"Your younger brother described her to me
as an alms-gift,
and, not knowing, I said,
'Share and enjoy your alms.'

5 O excellent Kaurava,
tell me how my advice should be kept,
how adharma may not touch the Pāñcāla princess,
nor she suffer in any way."

6 Yudhiṣṭhira, foremost Kaurava,
questioned by his mother,
thought for some time; then,
turning to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, he said:

7 "Phālguni-Arjuna, since it was you
who won Yājñasanī-Draupadī;
it is right that you should marry her
by the ritual of the sacred fire."

8 Arjuna replied: "O Indra-among-men!
That would he adharma.
What you advise is not dharma.
You are the eldest;
you should be the first to marry.
Then mahā-muscled Bhīma.

9 Then I, Nakula and Sahadeva.
O rājā, Vṛkodara-Bhima,
I, the twins and this lady
await your instructions.

10 Do what your wisdom tells you is right
in these circumstances,
and agrees with dharma, fame,
and the welfare of rājā Drupada.
We are here to obey
whatever you advise as right."

11 The sons of Pāṇḍu heard
these bhaktī-filled, affectionate words
of Jiṣṇu-Arjuna. Then one by one
they glanced at the Pāñcāla princess.

12 Lovely Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī looked at them.
They looked at each other.
They sat down.
Each had her in his heart.

13 The way those magnificent heroes
looked at Draupadī,
it was clear that love overpowered
their hearts and senses.

14 Only the Supreme Creator
could have created such beauty
as was Pāñcālī-Draupadī's – a paragon
of exquisite ravishing perfection.

15 Kuntī's son finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
guessed by their behaviour
what was in their minds,
and recalled Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa's words.

16 Afraid that dissension might arise
between the brothers,
Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Auspicious Draupadī
will marry all of us."

17 The Pāṇḍavas heard
their elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira say this,
and were silent,
lost in thought.

18 Krishna, Vṛṣni chief,
and Rohiṇī's son Balarāma,
came to the potter's house
where the Pāṇḍavas were staying.

19 Krishna and Rohiṇī's son Balarāma
saw Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
long-armed hero, sitting inside,
surrounded by his radiant brothers.

20 Vāsudeva-Krishna approached Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son, finest of the Ajamīḍhas,
touched the feet of that finest of dharma-knowers
and said, "I am Krishna."

21 Rohiṇī's son Balarāma did the same.
The Pāṇḍavas were delighted
to have Krishna and Balarāma
with them.

22 Then, O great Bharata Janamejaya,
the two chiefs of the Yādavas
touched the feet of Kuntī,
their father's sister.

23 Enemy-of-no-one Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
enquired after Krishna's health, saying,
"How were you able, Vāsudeva-Krishna,
to pierce through our disguise?"

24 Vāsudeva-Krishna smiled and replied,
"O rājā! Can fire be kept hidden?
Who but the Pāṇḍavas
could have performed today's feats?

25 It is your great good luck,
O Pāṇḍavas, to have survived
the burning lac-house, your luck
that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wicked son
Duryodhana has not been able
to execute his plans.

26 My blessings on you!
May you flourish,
as fire in a cave leaps up and grows!
And now, give us leave to return,
or we may be spotted."
Illimitably auspicious Krishna and Balarāma,
taking Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
quickly left.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR

1 The Pāñcāla prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
tailed the two Pāṇḍava brothers
to the potter's hut

2 He ordered his guards back,
and hid himself,
unknown to the Pāṇḍavas,
behind the potter's hut.

3 The evening, foe-destroying
Bhīma, Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
and the mahā-minded twins returned
from their alms-rounds,
and offered cheerfully
their alms to Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 Sweet-speaking Kuntī said
to the daughter of Drupada:
"Sweet one, offer a portion
of this food to the gods;
after which, distribute it
among Brahmins.

5 Feed the hungry next,
and then our guests;
divide the remainder
into two equal halves;
divide one half into six,
four for them, two for us;

6 One full half is for
fair-complexioned, elephant-huge Bhīma,
who is very strong
and eats more than others."

7 The unquestioning chaste princess
did exactly as instructed
by her mother-in-law;
and they all ate.

8 Mādrī's son Sahadeva
unrolled a mat of kuśa-grass;
they spread deer-skins on it,
and lay down.

9 They lay with their heads
facing southwards.
Kuntī lay alongside their heads,
Draupadī at their feet.

10 Though Draupadī had to sleep
on a kuśa-mat,
she bore not the slightest complaint
against the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas.

11 They talked of wonderful weapons,
chariots, swords,
arrows, battle-axes, elephants,
and other relevant topics.

12 Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
eavesdropped on their conversation,
and his men saw Draupadī
sleeping on the ground.

13 Hastily Prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna returned
to the Pāñcāla palace
to report to his father in detail
what he overheard.

14 The Pāñcāla rājā Drupada listened to him sadly.
He did not know they were the Pāṇḍavas.
He asked: "How is my daughter
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī? And who are they?

15 Has my head been polluted
by the dirty feet of Śūdras,
or debt-ridden Vaiśyas?
Has a garland of flowers
been snatched from me and cast
on a funeral pyre?

16 Tell me, my son,
has my daughter been won
by a high-caste Kṣatriya
or even higher Brahmin,
or has some low-caste man placed
his left foot on my head?

17 No greater good fortune
could be mine than a man
like Pārtha-Arjuna marrying her.
Tell me, son, who is it?

18 Are the sons of Pāṇḍu,
Vicitravīrya's glorious heirs,
still alive? Was it Pārtha-Arjuna
who pierced the target?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE

1 Dhṛṣṭadyumna of the Somaka dynasty,
asked by his father,
happily gave him the following details
about Draupadī's husband:

2 "He had large, radiant eyes;
wore black deerskin; looked like a god;
he strung the bow,
pierced the target;
soon the Brahmins surrounded him,
praising his feat;

3 He was impatient
with the other suitors;
surrounded by the Brahmins,
he looked like thunder-
wielding Indra in the midst
of ṛṣis and gods.

4 Like a female elephant
following the leader of a herd,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī joyfully followed him,
holding on to his deerskin.
Unable to tolerate this,
the kings advanced angrily.

5 Suddenly in the pavilion
came another hero,
who uprooted a large tree,
and swung it at the kings,
like the angry god of death Antaka
striking down all creatures.

6 The kings, paralysed,
    stood agape at these two
sun-and-moon-like heroes,
    who, taking Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
with them, went away
    to a potter's hut.

7 There, a flame-bright lady
    (I think their mother) sat;
around her were three
    flame-bright men.

8 The two heroes touched
    her feet, and asked Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to do the same. They left her,
    and went to collect alms.

9 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī took the food from them,
    offered a portion to the gods,
gave another portion
    to Brahmins, a portion
to the elderly lady,
    divided the rest among
the great heroic men,
    and herself ate last of all.

10 When they lay down to sleep,
    Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī chose to stretch herself
alongside their feet,
    on a deerskin spread on a kuśa-mat.

11 From the way they talked
    (they had cloud-booming voices)
and the topics they discussed,
    I could see they were
not Brahmins, nor Vaiśyas,
    nor, indeed, Śūdras.

12 O rāja! There is no doubt
they are bull-brave Kṣatriyas –
they talked only of fighting
and allied matters.
We are very lucky. We had heard
the Pāṇḍavas eacaped the fire –

13 And from the way
the youth pierced the target,
the energy which he displayed,
and the subjects they discussed,
I am absolutely convinced
they are Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons, disguised."

14 Rājā Drupada, elated,
immediately despatched
his purohita to ascertain whether
they were mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu's sons.

15 Ordered by the king,
the purohita visited them,
greeted them respectfully,
and said to them:

16 "Most respectworthy of men,
boon-granting Drupada,
rājā of Pāñcāla,
wishes to know who you are.
His joy spills over to welcome
the target-piercing youth.

17 Give us details
of your family and race.
May you gladden the hearts
of Pāñcāla and his retinue,
may you place your feet
on the heads of your enemies.

18 King Pāṇḍu was a loved-and-loving
sakhā-friend of rājā Drupada –
almost like his second self.
Drupada's one desire
has been to make Draupadī
Pāṇḍu's daughter-in-law.

19 O spotlessly excellent heroes!
Drupda's one desire has been
to marry Draupadī according to dharma
to long-armed Arjuna.

20 Nothing could excel that.
Nothing could be more beneficial,
nothing more conducive
to fame and virtue."
He paused.
Yudhiṣṭhira saw him sitting humbly,

21 And said: "Bring water to wash
his feet, and offer him *arghya*.
He is rājā Drupada's purohita,
most worthy of our pūjā-respect.
He deserves from us more
that ordinary reverence."

22 Bhima offered pūjā-respect as instructed.
The purohita happily
accepted the courteous homage.
Yudhiṣṭhira said to the Brahmin:

23 "Rājā Drupada of Pāñcāla
did not give his daughter away
by free choice – following his sva-dharma
he arranged a test of skill.
For this reason,
he has no cause to question

24 The kind of husband
obtained – his caste,
character, lineage, family.
The requirements of the test
were satisfied by stringing the bow
and piercing the target.

25 This mahā-ātmaned youth did that
and won Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī as his bride.
Why does Drupada of the Somaka dynasty
now desire otherwise?
He has no reason –
he hurts himself needlessly.

26 O Brahmin! The Pāñcāla princess, we think,
is most deserving and excellent.
Rājā-Drupada's chief desire
has been fulfilled.

27 Could a weakling have lifted
and strung the bow?
Could one of low birth or unskilled in arms
have pierced the target?

28 There is no reason for the Pāñcāla rājā Drupada
to be sorry for his daughter.
No man can now undo
what this hero has done."

29 He had not finished speaking
when a messenger
from the Pāñcāla rājā rushed in
and shouted, "The feast is ready!"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX

1 "A feast for the bridegroom's party,"
announced the messenger,
"ordered by rājā Drupada,
to celebrate the wedding
of his daughter. Finish your rites,
and hurry to the palace!

2 Chariots, with friezes of golden lotus,
pulled by splendid horses,
are waiting. Hurry!
Come to the palace of Pāñcāla!"

3 The Pāṇḍavas sent back the purohita,
assisted Kuntī and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
into one of the chariots,
and drove to the palace.

4 In the meanwhile,
Drupada learnt from the purohita
all that Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira had said
and, in order to test them,
he kept ready for them
a wealth of articles,

5 Such as fruits,
specially-woven garlands, shields,
war-armour, carpets, seeds,
ropes, cattle, and so on.

6 In addition to these,
he collected other articles
used in different arts,
and many kinds of sports equipment.

7 Everywhere one looked
were shields, armours,
splendid swords and daggers, chariots, horses;
also special weapons

8 Studded with gold,
darts and missiles, battle-axes,
beds and carpets – indeed,
every conceivable luxury.

9 Taking the virtuous Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
with her, Kuntī entered
the palace's inner apartments.
The palace ladies welcomed the Kauravas' wife.

10 O rājā! Seeing
the long-gaited, deerskin-dressed,
bull-eyed and broad-shouldered
finest-among-men Pāṇḍavas,

11 With long arms
like the bodies of glorious snakes,
the rājā, his ministers, sons,
relatives and courtiers – all rejoiced.

12 With perfect ease of manner,
the heroic Pāṇḍavas sat down
on the opulent low seats,
in the order of their ages.

13 Colourfully-attired
male and female attendants and cooks
served succulent royal dishes
in gold and silver plates.

14 The great heroes dined,
and relaxed. After the meal,
ignoring the other items,
they began examining the war-weapons.

15 Rājā Drupada, his sons and ministers
noticed this,
and concluded joyfully
that they were Kuntī's royal sons.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN

1 Then the mahā-illustrious Pāñcāla king
said to Yudhiṣṭhira
as he would to a Brahmin,
"Are you Kṣatriyas or Brahmins,

2 Or are you talented Vaiśyas
or men of Śūdra birth?
Or are you gods,
using māyā to roam

3 Disguised as Brahmins,
who have come to marry Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī ?
Tell us the truth.
Nothing seems clear to us.

4 For the truth, it seems,
will bring us great joy.
O great foe-subduer,
has fortune indeed smiled on us?

5 Speak the truth freely.
Truth-speaking becomes rājās
better than *iṣṭa*-sacrifices
and asceticism,
pūrta-charity and goodness.
Never tell a lie.

6 O god-like hero,
after I have heard you speak,
I will announce the necessary festivities
for the wedding."

7 "Rājā of Pāñcāla," replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"do not worry.
Be glad. What you suspected
is indeed the truth.

8 We are Kṣatriyas,
sons of mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍu.
I am the eldest of Kunti's sons;
these are Bhīma and Arjuna.

9 They won your daughter
in the svayaṁvara pavilion.
The twins and our mother
are with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

10 So be relieved;
we are indeed Kṣatriyas;
your daughter is a lotus transplanted
from one lake to another.

11 And you, mahārāja, are to us
like a respected superior,
a haven of shelter.
There is nothing more I can say."

12 Tears of joy came to rājā Drupada's eyes
as soon as Yudhiṣṭhira finished.
For some time
he could not answer Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 Then, with an effort
checking his joy,
the great foe-subduing monarch
was able to speak.

14 The dharmātmā king asked
how they had escaped from the city.
Yudhiṣṭhira gave the account
in exact detail.

15 After Kuntī's son
had described the escape,
rājā Drupada pointedly criticised
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

16 Finest of eloquent speakers Drupada
assured Yudhiṣṭhira
of every assistance in the matter
of recovering his kingdom.

17 Because Drupada wished it,
Kuntī, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins
decided to stay back in the palace.

18 O rājā! Yajñasena-Drupada treated them
with the utmost pūjā-respect.
He and his sons were reassured;
he said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

19 "This auspicious day
the mahā-muscled Kuru prince Arjuna
will marry Draupadī
with due ritual."

20 Dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said
to Drupada:
"In that case, O king,
I too must marry."

21 "Certainly," replied Drupada,
"you may marry my daughter
if you please; or marry Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to any brother of your choice."

22 Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Draupadi will be our common queen
O rājā, this is the will
of our mother.

23 I am still unmarried.
So is Bhīmasena.
Your jewel of a daughter
was won by Arjuna.

24 We have an agreement to share
and enjoy equally this jewel.
O excellent rājā! We will not break
our agreement in this case.

25 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī will be the common queen
of us all, by rule of dharma.
Let her marry us one by one before the sacred fire,
in order of age."

26 Drupada replied: "It is permitted
for one man to have many queens;
but I have never heard of one wife
having many husbands.

27 You are noble, you know dharma.
You should not do something
so contrary to dharma.
What is wrong with you, Kuntī's son?"

28 "Dharma, mahārāja," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"is subtle – who knows
how it works? – Safer for us to follow
the examples of the ancient past.

29 I have never said an untruth,
never induged in adharma.
My mother's will is my will
because I know she is right.

30 Our action is within dharma.
Have no fears about that.
It is best, O rājā,
not to have any doubts in this matter."

31 "Very well, Kuntī's son,"
replied Drupada,
"you, Kuntī and my son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
will settle this. Advise me tomorrow."

32 At that precise moment, O rājā,
as they began discussing,
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa happened to come
to the palace.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-EIGHT

1 The Pāṇḍavas, the mahā-illustrious Pāñcāla king,
and all others stood up,
and respectfully
greeted mahātmā Kṛṣṇa-Vyāsa.

2 Vyāsa accepted their pūjā-respect
and asked about their welfare;
they brought him a pure gold seat
on which he relaxed.

3 Then infinitely radiant Kṛṣṇa-Vyāsa
motioned the entire
illustrious company to sit
on their luxurious seats.

4 Soon after, Pṛṣata's son Drupada,
in a pleasant voice,
asked the mahātmā ṛṣi
about Draupadī's marriage.

5 "Is it possible, revered one,"
asked Drupada, "for a girl to be
the dharma-patnī of many husbands
without incurring taint? Tell us."

6 "As things are,"
Vyāsa replied,
"tradition and the Vedas no more support
the dharma of such a marriage.
But I would like to know
the opinion of each of you first."

7 "O finest of Brahmins! It's adharma," said Drupada.
"Both tradition and the Vedas
are against it. One wife with many husbands –
is sanctioned nowhere!

8 The mahātmās of the past
never allowed such a dharma
among them. Learned men should
on no account encourage adharma.

9 Far be it from me to advise anyone
to act this way.
If you ask me,
this is a very peculiar dharma."

10 Dhṛṣṭadyumna said:
"Bull-like *dvija,* ascetic ṛṣi,
Brahmin, tell me –
how can an elder brother,
with a clean conscience,
justify sleeping
with his younger brother's wife?

11 I know dharma is subtle.
I don't know all its subtleties.
How can we be sure
this is dharma, that adharma?

12 I cannot in good conscience
allow this to happen.
Brahmin, I will never say
'Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī will marry five husbands'."

13 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"I have never said an untruth,
never indulged in adharma.
What my conscience approves
can never be adharma.

14 I have heard in the Purāṇas
of Jaṭilā, a lady of the Gotama race,
a paragon of dharma,
who married seven ṛṣis at one time.

15 The daughter of ṛṣi Kuṇḍu,
named Vārkṣi ‘the Tree-Born One,’
married ten brothers, each named Pracetas,
all paragons of *tapas*.

16 O greatest of dharma-knowers!
Isn’t it said that obedience to gurus
is the greatest dharma?
What greater guru than one’s mother?

17 Our mother’s clear command was:
‘Share and equally enjoy
what you have.’ Best of *dvijas*!
To me this is the highest dharma.”

18 Kuntī said:
“What dharma-dedicated Yudhiṣṭhira says
is right. I fear my words
will become as pointless as lies.
And if that happens,
will I not be tainted with untruth?”

19 Vyāsa said: “Auspicious lady,
untruth will not touch you.
This is Sanātana Dharma.”
Turning to Drupada he said:
“I will not discuss this before all.
Only with you, O rājā of Pāñcāla.

20 I will explain
how this practice originated, and why
it is Sanātana Dharma.
What Yudhiṣṭhira said earlier
agrees with dharma.
I am convinced of this.”

21 Bhagavān Vyāsa,
lord Dvaipāyana, rose,
took rājā Drupada by the hand,
and went inside the palace.

22 Kuntī, the Pāṇḍavas,
and Pṛṣata's descendant Dhṛṣṭadyumna
waited for them both
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

23 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa carefully explained to
mahā-ātmaned Drupada
how the marriage of one wife to many husbands
agreed with dharma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

1 Vyāsa said: "In the distant
past, the gods performed
a *sattra*-sacrifice in Naimiṣa forest.
Vivasvata-Sūrya's
son Yama
was the butcher-priest.

2 Having received the dīkṣā-initiation,
Yama stopped killing human beings
for a while. As a result,
the human population swelled.

3 A group of gods –
Soma, Śakra-Indra, Varuṇa, Kubera,
the Sādhyas, Rudras, Vasus,
the twin Aśvins – approached Prajāpati,

4 The Loka-Guru World-Creator Brahmā.
They said: 'We are afraid
of humans increasing so fast.
We seek your protection.'

5 'But you are gods, you are immortal,'
said Pitāmaha Brahmā.
'Why should you be afraid
of mere mortals?'

6 'The mortals have become almost immortal,'
they replied.
'No difference between them and us.
We are perplexed and afraid.
We come to you hoping
you will keep us superior to them.'

7 Bhagavān Brahmā replied:
'Vaivasvata-Yama is engaged
in a great sacrifice, for which reason
human beings are not dying.
When his sacrifice is over,
death will again take mortals.

8 When that time comes,
Vaivasvata-Yama will have been fortified
by your powers,
and he will sweep to their deaths
thousands of human beings,
rendering them totally helpless.'

9 Reassured by these words,
the mahā-powerful gods went to the place
of Yama's sacrifice; and saw
a lotus rising from the Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā.

10 They were astonished.
Indra, foremost of the gods,
went to the Gaṅgā's source;
there he saw a flame-bright devī.

11 She had come to fetch water.
She stood in the waters of the Gaṅgā,
weeping. Her tear-drops, falling,
became golden lotuses.

12 Marvelling, thunder-wielding Indra
approached her,
and said: 'Sweet girl, who are you?
why are you weeping?'

13 The girl replied: 'O Śakra-Indra!
I am an ill-fated woman!
I will tell you who I am,
and why I weep.
Come with me as I lead the way,
and see for yourself.'"

14 Vyāsa continued:
"Indra followed her and soon
saw a handsome young man
sitting on a throne on the peak
of the highest mountain;
with him was a young girl;
both were playing with dice.

15 Devāraja-Indra said to the preoccupied youth,
'Young man, the world
is ruled by me!' No response.
'I am the world's lord!'

16 The young man paused;
he saw Indra fuming,
looked at him, and smiled.
Deva-rāja lord of the gods Indra was petrified.

17 The dice-game ended.
He said to the weeping girl,
'Bring him here.
I'll see he never shows his pride again.'

18 He touched Śakra-Indra; numbed,
Indra fell on the ground.
The fiercely-radiant youth said,
'Śakra-Indra, never do this again!

19 So! You are so very strong, are you?
Very well, remove this stone,
enter the cave, and wait inside –
there are sun-splendid others like you there.'

20 Indra removed the huge stone.
Inside the cave were four like him.
He began to worry –
Will I become like them?

21 The lord of the mountain
looked with wide eyes
at the wielder of thunder,
'Śatakratu-Indra! get in –
for you have foolishly
insulted me.'

22 Ordered by the Over-lord,
the rājā of the gods trembled,
like the storm-shaken leaf
of a mountain *aśvattha*.

23 Ordered by the bull-rider,
Indra trembled uncontrollably;
he joined his palms, and said
to the multi-formed one: 'Lord of the Universe!'

24 The fierce fire-bright deity replied,
smiling, 'People like you
never get my grace.
The four inside the cave
were like you. Go in!
And lie with them.

25 All of your kind should suffer
the same fate –
all of you will be born
in the world of men,

26 Where, after being reponsible
for the slaughter of many men,
you will again find Indra's heaven
for your various acts
of good karma. Many-branching
will be your human feats.'

27 The Indras of the past said:
'We will leave heaven
and go to the regions of mankind
where mokṣa is difficult.
But on one condition –
that the gods Dharma, Vāyu,
Indra and the twin Aśvins become
our fathers. Then, after an earth-war
with human and divine weapons,
we will return to the realm of Indra.'

28 Thunderbolt-wielding Indra heard this,
and addressed the supreme Deity:
'Instead of going personally, I will,
with a fragment of my grandeur,
make a fifth Indra,
who will be my son.'

29 The five Indras of the past are:
Viśvabhuk, Bhūta-dhāma,
the illustrious Śibi, Śānti, the fourth;
and Tejasvin the fifth.

30 The Bhagavān of the fearsome bow Śīva
granted the five Indras
their desires, and appointed
celestially-lovely Śrī-Lakṣmi
to be their common wife
during their earth-lives.

31 Accompanied by these Indras,
Siva went to Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu,
radiant, infinite, intangible,
self-born, eternal world-essence.

32 Narayana approved of the plan,
    and the five Indras
were born as earth-men.
    Hari-Nārāyaṇa then plucked
two hairs from his body –
    one white, the other black.

33 The hairs entered the wombs
    of two Yādava ladies,
Devakī and Rohiṇī –
    the white hair took birth in Rohiṇī
as Baladeva-Balarāma;
    the black, Keśava-Krishna, in Devakī.

34 O rājā! They were none other than
    the four Pāṇḍavas, these cave-hidden Indras.
And Savyasācī-Arjuna is, indeed,
    a projection of Śakra-Indra.

35 In this way were born
    the five Pāṇḍavas, O rājā,
and it was ordained that Lakṣmī
    be their divinely lovely wife Draupadī.

36 She who shines like the sun,
She who shines like the moon,
She whose fragrance covers a *krośa,*
How could she be born on earth
Except in a marvellous manner?
Therefore, she rose from your yajña.

37 O Indra-among-men, now I happily
    give you divine sight –
look at Kuntī's sons
    in their ancient, sacred forms."

38 Liberal-hearted and pure-minded Brahmin Vyāsa
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
with tapasyā-power granted him divine sight;
and rājā Drupada saw the Pāṇḍavas

39 Divinely-fleshed,
with gold crowns and divine ornaments,
each like Śakra-Indra,
fire-and-sun-radiant,
handsome, young, broad-chested,
each tall as a palm-tree.

40 Lovely were their dresses,
fragrant garlands adorned their bodies;
they looked like three-eyed Śivas,
like guṇa-rich Maruts, Rudras, or Ādityas.

41 Seeing them as four Indras,
and Arjuna as Indra's son himself,
rājā Drupada was both bewildered
and delighted by the display of māyā.

42 Looking at his fire-and-sun-radiant daughter,
he felt none could match
her beauty, glory, and excellence.
She was the ideal wife
for the five Pāṇḍava-Indras.

43 Mahā-stupefied by the vision,
Drupada touched the feet of Vyāsa,
Satyavatī's son, and exclaimed,
"O wonder-working paragon of a ṛṣi!"

44 Vyāsa said, "There was once
a mahātmā-ṛṣi's daughter,
beautiful and chaste; she lived in a forest;
she could not find a husband.

45 Her severe tapasyā pleased Śaṅkara-Śiva
So pleased was Īśvara-Śiva
that he asked her,
'What do you want?'

46 In her eagerness she repeatedly said
to the boon-granting god,
'I want a husband
who has all the virtues.'

47 Lord-of-gods Deveśa-Śiva-Śaṅkara, pleased,
said to her, 'Sweet girl,
you will have
five husbands.'

48 Speaking softly and pleasing him,
she replied,
'But, O Śaṅkara-Śiva,
I want only one husband.'

49 Deva-deva, the god-of-gods-Śiva, pleased,
said again to her,
'You asked me five times,
I want a husband.

50 Therefore, sweet girl,
you will get what you asked.
May you be blessed.
This will happen in a future birth.'

51 Your divinely-radiant daughter
is that girl.
Faultless Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī of the Pṛṣatas
was destined to have five husbands.

52 Heavenly Lakṣmī rose from the mahā-sacrifice
to be the wife of the Pāṇḍavas.
Only very severe tapasyā
made her your daughter.

53 O rājā! Lakṣmī, beloved of the gods,
is married to five husbands
because self-born Svayambhu-Brahmā willed it.
The rest is up to you, rājā Drupada."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED

1 Drupada said:
"Maharṣi, only in my ignorance
did I obstruct the marriage.
Now that you have explained it,
I cannot go against divine will.

2 The course of destiny cannot be altered.
One's own actions seem futile.
I had hoped for one husband for her;
many came.

3 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī asked for a husband
five times, and her boon was granted
accordingly. Only Bhagavān Śiva knows
its right or wrong.

4 Since Śaṅkara-Śiva has decided
that this dharma or adharma
should be so, let it be so! No fault of mine!
Let them all marry Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī."

5 Turning to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhagavān Vyasa said, 'Today, Yudhiṣṭhira,
is an auspicious day. The moon
has entered the constellation of Pauṣya.
Therefore, be the first today
to take Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's hand."

6 Rājā Drupada and his son made preparations;
expensive wedding gifts were readied;
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī bathed,
arrived, decked with pearls and diamonds.

7 The king's friends and relatives,
ministers, Brahmins, citizens,
as custom ordained, were invited
to the wedding ceremony.

8 King Drupada's palace,
glittering with eminent citizens,
with lotus-and-lily-crowded courtyards,
with diamonds and precious stones
everywhere, resembled the star-studded
scintillating sky.

9 The Kaurava princes bathed,
put on expensive robes,
sandal-paste, ear-rings, and performed
the *abhiṣekha* and maṅgala rites.

10 One by one, led by their purohita,
fire-effulgent Dhaumya,
joyfully they entered,
like splendid bulls in cowsheds.

11 Learned-in-the-Vedas Dhaumya
lit the sacred fire, poured
the libations to the chanting
of mantras, called Yudhiṣṭhira
to the fire, and united
him to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

12 Circumambulating the sacred fire,
the couple held each other's hands,
and were married.
Then the purohita Dhaumya left the palace.

13 These mahā-chariot-warriors,
enhancers of Kaurava glory,
dressed in expensive robes,
on successive days
one by one
took her hand in marriage.

14 The celestial ṛṣi stated the marvellous way
Draupadī, slim-waisted, mahā-sensitive,
liberal, generous-hearted lady,
regained her virginity each night.

15 After the wedding, Drupada gave
expensive presents to each Pāṇḍava –
a hundred gold-flagged chariots,
each with four gold-bridled horses;

16 A hundred elephants graced
with auspicious marks on their temples
like so many gold-peaked mountains;
a hundred ornamented and garlanded maids.

17 Making the sacred fire his witness,
generous-hearted Drupada of the lunar race
gave each god-like hero
wealth, ornaments, and robes.

18 Loaded with great wealth
and the most priceless of treasures,
Śrī-Lakṣmī herself,
the maha-powerful-Pāṇḍava-Indras
spent many days enjoying themselves
in the Pāñcāla king's capital.

19 Each Pāṇḍava, O king, was delighted
with Yājñasenī-Draupadī's sweetness
and painstaking solicitude–
Draupadī took special care to please.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED ONE

1 Allied now with the Pāṇḍavas
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
king Drupada feared no one,
not even the gods.

2 The palace ladies of mahā-ātmaned Drupada
came to Kuntī;
introducing themselves, one by one
they touched her feet with their heads.

3 Dressed in silk, her wrists
circled with auspicious threads,
Draupadī stood before her mother-in-law,
hands folded in *añjali*.

4 And Kuntī affectionately blessed
sweet-speaking, virtuous,
beautiful Draupadī, who was graced
with all the auspicious marks.

5 "As Indrāṇī to Harihaya-Indra,
Svāhā to Vibhāvasu,
Rohiṇī to Soma,
Damayantī to Nala,

6 As Bhadrā to Vaiśravaṇa,
Arundhatī to Vasiṣṭha,
Lakṣmī to Nārāyāṇa,
may you be to your husbands.

7 Sweet girl, may you be mother
of long-lived heroes;
may you be happy,
may you prosper,
may you be devoted to your husbands,
O *yajña-patnī*.

8 May you spend your time
happily receiving guests,
and strangers, and sādhus,
children, elders, and gurus.

9 May you be queen
of the kingdom of Kurujāṅgala
with your husband
in the capital Kurujāṅgala.
May you always
cherish dharma.

10 May you witness the gifting
of the whole earth to Brahmins
in a massive *aśvamedha*
by your mahā-powerful husbands.

11 Most accomplished of women,
auspicious lady! –
May you have all the world's virtues,
may a hundred happinesses be yours.

12 As I am happy today, *vadhū*,
seeing you in silk, my daughter-in-law,
so will I be happy
when you give birth to a son."

13 When the marriage was over,
Krishna presented the Pāṇḍavas
with gold ornaments inlaid
with pearls and *vaidūrya* gems.

14 Mādhava-Krishna also gave presents
of extravagant robes
from many parts of the world,
and soft blankets and skins,

15 Expensive beds, carpets,
and other luxuries,
along with hundreds
of pearl-and- *vaidūrya*-inlaid utensils.

16 Krishna presented them
with thousands of female attendants,
all young, lovely, wearing ornaments
of various countries.

17 He gave them many
expertly trained elephants of Madra,
brilliantly-caparisoned horses,
and a large number of chariots
pulled by shining-hued horses
with large, white teeth.

18 Madhusūdana-Krishna of immeasurable largesse
also sent them
millions of pure gold coins
in countless heaps

19 And because he wanted to please
Govinda-Krishna,
Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira gladly accepted
all these munificent gifts.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWO

1 Word soon got round to the kings
through their spies
(continued Vaiśampāyana) that auspicious
Draupadī had married the Pāṇḍavas;

2 That the bow-bender and target-piercer
was mahā-ātmaned Arjuna,
finest of victory-winning
and bow-wielding heroes;

3 That the giant of a man who had repulsed
Śalya, rājā of Madra,
and had terrorised all
with the tree-trunk,

4 Was none other than Bhīma,
the crusher of foes,
the most fearless of men,
whose very touch was like death.

5 The kings were astonished
to learn how skilfully Kuntī's sons
had disguised themselves
as gentle Brahmins.

6 They had assumed that Kuntī
and the Pāṇḍavas had perished
in the fire; it looked as if
the Pāṇḍavas had been re-born.

7 Recalling the grisly plot
of Purocana,
they blamed Bhīṣma and others
of the Kuru race.

8 "Imagine!" they said among themselves –
"that Dhṛtarāṣṭra should even think
of hurting the dharma-loving,
mother-devoted Pāṇḍavas!"

9 Meanwhile, the kings still present,
learning that the svayaṁvara
and wedding ceremonies were over,
had returned to their kingdoms.

10 The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
instigated by Karṇa and Śakuni,
discussed the matter,
and were greatly agitated.

11 Śakuni said, "There are two kinds of enemies –
one that needs constant harassment,
another needs systematic enfeeblement.
Kuntī's sons are different –
they need to be exterminated.

12 If you swallow this shame
without protest,
you will be making a mistake
you will regret all your life.

13 Now is the time, and this is the place,
to wipe out the Pāṇḍavas.
Fail now, and you become
the world's laughing-stocks.

14 If you ask my opinion,
the strength and prowess of rājā Drupada,
who now shelters the Pāṇḍavas,
is negligible.

15 Kill the Pāṇḍavas now – before
the Vṛṣṇi chiefs, lion-among-men Cedi
and illustrious Śiśupāla learn
that they are still alive.

16 If they ever join forces
with mahā-ātmaned Drupada,
it will be impossible
to accomplish our aim.

17 It's only so long
as they are not united
that we have this excellent chance
of finishing off the Pāṇḍavas.

18 They managed to escape
from the snake-poisonous fire-trap.
If they give us the slip this time,
fear will rule us all our lives.

19 If the Vṛṣṇis and Cedis
and the people here
start attacking each other,
coming between them
would be as foolhardy
as coming between two tussling bulls.

20 The best thing to do
is to attack – attack now!
Attack before the armies of Balarāma,
like insect-hordes,

21 Join hands with the armies of Drupada.
O bravest of heroes,
that is the best advice I can give
in these circumstances."

22 Somadatta's son Bhūriśravas
heard scheming Śakuni attentively
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and gave excellent advice:

23 "It is essential that a king should know
his seven strengths,
and proceed only on the basis
of the six qualities.

24 Place, power, traitors, prospects,
allies, and bravery –
keeping these in mind
should one attempt to attack an enemy.

25 I find the Pāṇḍavas have
friends and wealth in plenty.
They are brave, energetic,
and their good deeds please everyone.

26 Arjuna with his valour
delights all who know him;
and his sweet-speaking manner
brings joy to all who listen.

27 The people are not pleased
only superficially.
They find his character admirable,
his behaviour irreproachable.

28 Has sweet-speaking Pārtha-Arjuna
ever once uttered words
that are irrelevant,
impertinent, false, or unpleasing?

29 All the Pāṇḍavas, indeed,
are endowed with virtues.
I do not find any heroes
to match their greatness.

30 Their influence is enormous,
their knowledge of mantras unsurpassed,
they are constantly on the lookout
for ways of greater improvement.

31 And Yudhiṣṭhira knows exactly
when he should use
his own powers, and when seek
the help of allies.
He eschews anger,
and prefers gentleness, gifts, secrecy,
and justice as ways
of winning friends for himself.

32 Yudhiṣṭhira has been known
to acquire allies
by lavish gifts of wealth –
transforming even enemies.

33 I think even Indra and other gods
would be unable to overcome
the Pāṇḍavas, who are friends
of Krishna and Balarāma.

34 My careful advice is –
let us be friends with them –
we came as friends,
let us depart as friends.

35 This great city has high towers,
hundreds of battlements,
and well-defended buildings.
It is well-stocked with

36 All varieties of food-grains,
liquids, medicines; its arsenal is huge;
there is no end
to the supplies and livestock.

37 The defences are splendidly structured –
rows of battlements,
and moats guarded by fire-spitting weapons
of mass destruction.

38 Three ring defences have been reported –
a brick wall,
a wood-barrier,
and third, the army of heroes.

39 Around the city is a ring
of tall *śāla*-trees,
themselves forming an almost
impenetrable barrier.

40 King Drupada and his subjects
are devoted to the city –
he lavishes gifts on workers
inside and outside his capital.

41 If the Pāṇḍavas are attacked,
the entire race of Yādavas
will rush in, armed with deadly weapons,
to their help.

42 How much wiser to make peace
between Duryodhana and the Pāṇḍavas,
and return unworried
to our kingdoms.

43 Believe me when I say
this is the best course of action.
If you have any faith in me,
you will do as I advise."

44 But rājā Duyodhana was depressed
by the sight of Śvetāvāhana-Arjuna
married to Draupadī.
He, Aśvatthāman, his maternal uncle Śakuni,

45 Karṇa, and Kṛpa,
reluctantly returned to Hastināpura.
On the way, Duḥśāsana,
smarting, said slowly:

46 "Had Arjuna not come disguised
as a Brahmin,
he could never have married Draupadī.
We were unable to recognise him!

47 Such is fate!
What's the use even trying?
The shame is on us, *tāta*, dear brother,
that the Pāṇḍavas are still alive."

48 Talking in this way,
and blaming Purocana,
they entered Hastināpura
in very low spirits.

49 Learning that the mahā-energetic Pāṇḍavas
had escaped
from the house of lac
and joined forces with Drupada,

50 And thinking also
of the prowess of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Śikhaṇḍin and other sons
of Drupada, skilled
in all the arts of warfare,
Duryodhana's spirits drooped.

51 When he learnt that Draupadī
had been won by the Pāṇḍavas,
and the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
had returned to the capital

52 Humiliated, Vidura's delight
was unbounded;
he went to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and said,
"Luck favours the Kauravas!"

53 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vicitravīrya's son,
delighted with the news,
exclaimed in great joy,
"What luck! What luck!"

54 Wisdom-inseeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra
ignorantly thought his son Duryodhana
had been chosen
by the daughter of Drupada.

55 Immediately he arranged
for ornaments for Draupadī,
and ordered that Duryodhana
with Draupadī come before him.

56 Vidura said,
"Draupadī has chosen the Pāṇḍavas
They are living happily
in the palace of king Drupada."

57 He added that after the svayaṁvara
they had joined forces with Drupada's army
and with the armies
of many of the invited kings.

58 Quickly masking his feelings,
the blind monarch
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"What luck! What luck!"

59 Dhṛtarāṣṭra added,
"Vidura, if this is indeed true,
if the Pāṇḍavas are still alive,
you bring wonderful news!

60 Kuntī is such a gentle girl.
That they are united with Drupada –
is excellent!
I tell you, Vidura,

61 King Drupada is among the highest-born –
he has wisdom, discipline, tapasyā.
His sons are noble.
His allies are formidable

62 Pāṇḍu's children are as dear to me
as they were to Pāṇḍu.
My affection for them now
is greater than ever before.

63 Pāṇḍu's sons are alive –
they are well – good news,
good news. All their new allies,
you say, are mahā powerful kings.

64 O Vidura, is there any king
who does not desire
to have Drupada and his relatives
as his allies?"

65 Vidura heard this
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
and said, "O rājā,
Be wise like this for a hundred years."

66 Some time later, Duryodhana
and Rādhā's son Karṇa
came to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and said to him:

67 "We could not find fault with you
with Vidura present.
But now you are alone.
Now we can speak our minds freely.

68 *Tāta,* dear father, what is the matter with you?
How can you think of our enemies
as you think of us?
How could you think
of praising the Pāṇḍavas
in front of Vidura?

69 *Tāta,* dear father!
Is this the way you should have acted?
Instead, shouldn't we try our best
to cut down their strength?

70 Let us not waste time.
Let us sit and devise a plan
before the Pāṇḍavas swallow us all –
sons, friends, and kinsmen."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THREE

1 "My son," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"I too want to do exactly
that you wish to do –
but I did not like Vidura to know.

2 That was why I kept praising
the Pāṇḍavas
in front of him – to make Vidura
in no way suspicious.

3 Now is the time, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
to tell me openly
what you and Rādheya-Karṇa
have in mind."

4 Duryodhana replied:
"Our plan is – get cunning, loyal Brahmins
to stir up quarrels
between the Pāṇḍavas –
between the sons of Kuntī
and the sons of Mādrī.

5 O rājā! Another scheme is to tempt
rājā Drupada and his sons
with large sums of wealth,
to betray Kuntī's son.

6 Perhaps we could arrange
to plant spies in Pāñcāla
who would tell the Pāṇḍavas
of the discomforts of Hastināpura,

7 And persuade them to stay permanently
in the kingdom of Drupada.
Another way would be
to instruct

8 Cunning and skilful men who,
very sweetly and subtly, would see
that seeds of jealousy were sown
among the five brothers.

9 Best of all, stir Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
against her husbands.
They are five – that should be easy.
Get one or two Pāṇḍavas
to find fault with her – in turn
she will be displeased with all of them.

10 O rājā! We could even hire assassins –
the best ones – to get rid
of Bhīma – he is the strongest
and bravest of them all.

11 Arjuna was able to humiliate us
only with his help.
Bhīma is brave, fierce;
he is the backbone of the Pāṇḍavas.

12 With Bhīma out of the way, O rājā,
the other Pāṇḍavas will be lost;
and they will give up trying
to recover their kingdom.

13 If wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhima backs Arjuna
in battle, Arjuna is invincible;
with Bhīma gone, Phālguna-Arjuna
is not one-fourth of Rādheya-Karṇa.

14 I am certain of this –
with Bhīma no longer there,
the enfeebled Pāṇḍavas
will not dare try to surprise us.

15 If they repent and come to us
for forgiveness, O rājā,
we will use the subtle arts
of political śāstra against them –

16 Like getting bewitching young girls
to seduce them – which Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
I am sure, will not find
much to her liking.

17 We could try sending Rādheya-Karṇa
to lure them here
on some pretext or other– once they are here,
we will get our people to finish them off.

18 Use any of these means
that appeals to you.
Time's running short,
we cannot endlessly delay.

19 So long as they have not built up
a complete accord
with bull-brave Drupada, we may succeed –
not later.

20 These are my suggestions, *tāta,* dear father,
for containing them.
Tell me – are they good or bad?
Rādheya-Karṇa, what do you think?"

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FOUR

1 "I am not happy, Duryodhana,
with your plans," said Karṇa.
"No trickery of that kind
will work against the Pāṇḍavas.

2 On previous occasions too
your tried cunning, and failed.
All these delicate and devious means
have proved useless.

3 And at that time they were staying
in the same palace,
they were inexperienced boys,
without friends. Yet you failed.

4 Now they stay far away,
they are grown up, they have friends.
I am convinced your shifty ways
will have no effect at all.

5 Fate is on their side, it seems.
What they want back
is their ancestral kingdom –
how can we stop them?

6 The best we can do is –
Strike! Strike today,
and exterminate them
once and for all.

7 Forget this idea of alienating Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
with the help of spies.
She chose them when they were poor –
now they're rich.

8 And it is well-known that a woman
hankers for many husbands.
Draupadī has five –
why should she be unhappy?

9 Rājā Drupada of Pāñcāla is a king
of strict principles.
Forget this idea of bribing him
to betray the Pāṇḍavas

10 His son is a noble youth
who admires the Pāṇḍavas.
All your underhand ways
will not influence him.

11 O bull-brave lord of the earth!
The best we can do is – Strike! Strike today,
and uproot them once and for all.
Say yes.

12 And let us strike now,
while we are strong,
and they weak – let us strike
ruthlessly, efficiently.
I know you want this.
Let us not think twice.

13 Lord of the earth! Son of Gāndhārī!
Before all their friends and relatives
can organise their forces,
let us finish them off!

14 Before rājā Drupada gets the chance,
along with his mahā-powerful son,
to march against us,
let us finish them off!

15 Before Vārṣṇeya-Krishna gets the chance
to lead his Yadavas into the capital
of Pāñcāla to help the Pāṇḍavas,
let us finish them off!

16 Wealth, sense-pleasures, kingdom –
there is nothing in this world
that Krishna will not sacrifice
for the Pāṇḍavas.

17 Strength gave mahā-ātmaned Bharata lordship
over the whole earth.
Strength gave Pākaśāsana-Indra over-lordship
of the three worlds.

18 Strength, O lord of the earth,
is the pride of a Kṣatriya.
Strength is the crowning glory
of the world's heroes.

19 No time to lose, O rājā!
Let us march with our fourfold army
against Drupada,
and capture the Pāṇḍavas.

20 Conciliation, gifts, bribery, and subversion
will not work.
There is only one way left –
naked strength!

21 Let's use our strength,
and defeat them,
and rule the world. O lord of the earth!
What other way is there?"

22 Illustrious Dhṛtarāṣṭra was impressed
by the son of Rādhā's words,
and praised Karṇa.
He said:

23 "Sūta's son, Karṇa, you are very wise,
you are an expert in war-weapons.
Your words breathe valour –
they are worthy of you.

24 I would suggest that both of you,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Vidura meet,
discuss everything,
and decide what is best for us all."

25 Mahā-glorious mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra summoned
all the three counsellors,
and discussed the matter with them
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIVE

1 Bhīṣma said:
"I can never approve of a quarrel
with the Pāṇḍavas.
Pāṇḍu and you to me are the same.

2 Gāndhārī's sons to me
are like Kuntī's sons,
I have to protect their interests
as much as I protect yours.

3 O lord of the earth!
You and I should care for them;
and Duryodhana and other Kauravas
should care for them too.

4 I do not like this bickering.
Make peace with them.
Give them half the kingdom
of their Kaurava ancestors.

5 You, Duryodhana, *tāta*, dear one, treat this kingdom
as your paternal property.
No less do they think it
as their paternal property.

6 And if the illustrious Pāṇḍavas are denied
what is theirs by right,
by what right do you or any other Bharata
claim the kingdom?

7 O bull-brave Bharata! Perhaps by adharma
this kingdom is now yours,
but they can equally well argue
it was theirs before it became yours.

8 Settle the matter amicably.
O lion-brave monarch!
Give them half the kingdom.
Act for everyone's good.

9 If you act otherwise,
no good will come of it.
I fear all our names will be tarnished
with dishonour.

10 Think of your good name.
Nothing's more precious than a good name.
Better to die
than lose one's good name.

11 O Kaurava! Son of Gāndhārī!
A man lives as long as his good name lives.
When his good name dies,
he dies.

12 O mahā-muscled one!
Do what the noblest Kauravas
would have done.
Follow the dharma of your forefathers.

13 We are lucky that Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons are alive,
lucky she is alive,
lucky Purocana failed
and perished in the fire.

14 Son of Gāndharī! Duryodhana!
From the time I heard
Kuntī's sons had perished in the flames,
I was stricken with shame,

15 I could not face anyone.
When the manner of Kuntī's dying
reached people's ears, they blamed not Purocana
but you, O lion-among-men.

16 Therefore, mahārāja,
look at it this way:
the escape of the Pāṇḍavas, their reappearance,
removes the blot on your name.

17 As long as the Pāṇḍavas are alive,
thunderbolt-wielding Indra himself
cannot refuse them what by right
belongs to them.

18 They are men of dharma,
they are single-minded;
yet by adharma they have been deprived
of their rightful share.

19 Act according to dharma.
If you wish to please me,
if you seek the good of all,
give them half the kingdom."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIX

1 "When friends are called, king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
to give advice," Drona said,
"they should speak words that conduce
to dharma, artha, and fame.

2 I am one with mahā-ātmaned Bhīṣma.
Let the sons of Kuntī
get their share, *Tāta*, dear one,
this is Sanātana Dharma.

3 O Bharata descendant,
send a sweet-speaking emissary
to Drupada. Send with him
gold and jewels as gifts.

4 Send with him rich presents
for the bride and her husbands.
Let him tell Drupada of your pleasure
at this new powerful alliance.

5 Let him tell rājā Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
that you and Duryodhana
are delighted
at the new turn of events.

6 Let him praise the propriety
of the alliance, let him add
that you take pride in it;
let him repeatedly
speak in the highest terms
of Kuntī's and Madrī's sons.

7 And explicitly instruct him
to present Draupadī
with the finest gold ornaments,
O Indra-among-rājās.

8 O bull-brave Bharata!
Appropriate gifts should also be made
to Drupada's sons,
to Kuntī and her sons.

9 And when he succeeds in this way
in propitiating Drupada and the Pāṇḍavas,
he should return with them
to Hastināpura.

10 When they get permission to come here,
order Duḥśāsana and Vikarṇa
to welcome them
with a splendid army.

11 Give the finest of the Kauravas,
the Pāṇḍavas, pūjā-respect;
grant them the right
to their paternal property.

12 Both I and Bhīśma, mahārāja,
are agreed on this –
the Pāṇḍavas are like your own children;
treat them accordingly."

13 "These two," interrupted Karṇa,
"depend on your favours,
and are your best friends. Strange that they
should advise you against your good!

14 Should a wise man accept
so-called good advice given
by an ill-motivated counsellor
who has hidden his real intentions?

15 In a man's deepest crisis,
friends can neither help
nor harm. His joy and sorrow
are in the hands of fate.

16 With wise man or fool, old or young,
with friends or without –
everything happens
when and where it happens.

17 I have heard of a rājā
called Ambuvīca, long ago,
who ruled in Rājagṛha
over the Magadhas.

18 A supremely carefree king –
the only work he did
was breathe in and breathe out.
His ministers managed his affairs.

19 One of his ministers, Mahākarṇi,
arrogated all power to himself
so much that he dared
to defy even the king.

20 He laid hands on everything –
all the luxuries of the palace –
the ornaments, the treasury,
the women, the sovereignty.

21 And still was not satiated.
His greed increased.
Next on his list of expropriations
was the kingdom itself.

22 But he failed – at least,
that is what I have heard –
though all the king ever did
was inhale and exhale air.

23 What conclusion can be drawn,
O king, except this –
that fate was on the king's side.
If fate is on your side,

24 If the kingdom is destined
to be yours, it will remain yours –
all the three worlds are powerless
to decree otherwise.
If the kingdom's not destined
to be yours, then that is final.

25 You are intelligent, you know
who gives honest and who
dishonest counsel. First make sure
who is loyal and who traitorous."

26 Droṇa said, "Because you are wicked,
your words come out wicked.
You blame us because
you wish the Pāṇḍavas harm.

27 Keep this in mind, Karṇa –
what I say is for everyone's good,
for the good of the Kuru dynasty.
If you think this wrong,
then tell us, here and now,
what *you* think is good.

28 If my advice is not followed,
advice that I have given
carefully for universal good,
the Kuru race is doomed."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVEN

1 "O rājā," said Vidura,
"noble words have been spoken here –
but of what use are they?
You do not listen to them.

2 Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu,
says what is for your good.
He is the finest of the Kurus,
but you do not listen to him.

3 What Droṇa has said is also
with your welfare in mind.
What Rādhā's son Karṇa says
is not going to help you.

4 I have been thinking,
and I have decided
that you have no better or wiser friend
than Bhīṣma and Droṇa.

5 They are old in years, in wisdom,
they are ripe in śāstra-knowledge.
They see with equal eyes
your sons and Pāṇḍu's sons.

6 O Bharata descendant!
I think in dharma and truth-speaking
they are not inferior to Gaya
and Daśaratha's son Dāśaratha-Rāma.

7 Have they ever
given you evil advice?
Have you ever
offended them in any way?

8 Why should Bhīṣma and Droṇa suddenly
give you wicked advice?
Everyone praises their truth-speaking.
They are honoured by all.

9 They are wise. They are the finest of men.
Is there any reason for them
to give you advice
that is wicked or crooked?

10 I am convinced
they cannot be bribed by wealth
to give prejudiced opinions.
They are firm in dharma.

11 O Bharata descendant! If you ask me,
what they have said is for your welfare.
The Pāṇḍavas are your sons,
even as Duryodhana.

12 So those who advise you, O rājā,
to harm the Pāṇḍavas
certainly do not have
your welfare at heart.

13 O rājā, if you feel partial
towards your sons,
then those who exploit your feelings
are not thinking of your welfare.

14 For these reasons I think
these two mahā-radiant mahātmās
have said nothing ill-motivated.
But you do not listen to them.

15 What they have said about
the invincibility of the Pāṇḍavas
is correct. O lion-among-men!
Think of your own good!

16 Can the ambidexterous Pāṇḍava
Savyasācī-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
be defeated in battle
even by great Maghavat-Indra himself?

17 Can mahā-muscled Bhīma
whose strength equals that
of ten thousand elephants,
be defeated even by the gods?

18 Is there a man alive
who wants to continue living
who dares challenge the twins,
who are like Yama's own sons?

19 And who can even think
of humbling the eldest Pāṇḍava,
in whom patience, kindness,
truth and valour commingle?

20 They have Balarāma to protect them,
Janārdana-Krishna to counsel them.
Heroic Sātyaki is with them.
Who is there whom the Pāṇḍavas
have not already defeated
in battle?

21 Their father-in-law is Drupada;
Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and his valiant brothers
are their brothers-in-law.

22 Remember this, O Bharata,
and keeping in mind
that their claim to the kingdom
precedes yours, cherish them.

23 Because of what Purocana did,
your name is blemished.
Wash off this taint
by treating them with kindness.

24 Your kindness will mean our welfare.
The Kuru race will prosper;
indeed, the entire Kṣatriya caste
will benefit.

25 Once, O rājā,
we fought a war with mighty Drupada.
Now let us have him as ally,
and strengthen our hands.

26 The Yādavas, descendants of Dāśārha,
are many,
and they are powerful.
Where Krishna is, they will be.
Victory is
where Krishna is.

27 Unless a man is cursed
by the gods,
why should he seek to get by war
what he can get through peace?

28 The citizens here, learning
that the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī
are still alive, cannot contain their joy
and want to see them.
O rājā! Act in a way
that will please the citizens.

29 Duryodhana. Karṇa,
and Subala's son Śakuni
are committed to adharma;
they are young, they are foolish,
they mean harm.
Do not listen to them.

30 You have all the virtues
of a king, O rājā,
I warned you once
that Duryodhana's mischief
would be the cause
of the destruction of the kingdom."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHT

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to Vidura:
"What Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
the shining ṛṣi Droṇa, and you advise,
is true and well-meant.

2 I do not deny that Pāṇḍu's sons,
mahā-chariot-heroes,
from the viewpoint of dharma,
are like my own sons.

3 If my sons have a right
to the Kaurava kingdom,
the sons of Pāṇḍu
have an equal claim on it.

4 Go, Kṣattā-Vidura, and speak to them
affectionately and bring them
and their mother here. Bring also
divinely-beautiful Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

5 It is our good luck that Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
are alive; our good luck she is alive;
we are lucky the mahā-chariot-heroes
have married Draupadī.

6 This good luck will increase our strength.
Good that Purocana is silenced.
At last, O Vidura,
I see an end to my grief."

7 Obeying Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Vidura went to meet king Yajñasena-Drupada
and the Pāṇḍavas.

8 He carried with him expensive gifts
of jewellery and gold
for Draupadī, the Pāṇḍavas
and Yajñasena-Drupada.

9 As soon as he arrived, learned-in-dharma
and all-śāstra-knowing Vidura
in the proper manner
paid his respects to Drupada.

10 King Drupada received him
as ordained by dharma,
and both enquired
after each other's health and welfare.

11 He saw Vāsudeva-Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas,
embraced them
with warm affection,
and enquired about their health.

12 They greeted infinitely-learned Vidura
with deep courtesy.
Even as Dhṛtarāṣṭra had instructed him,
he repeatedly spoke

13 Sweet and affectionate words to them;
after which,
he presented luxurious dresses and jewels
to the Pāṇḍavas,

14 Kuntī, Draupadī, Drupada,
and the sons of Drupada,
saying they had been sent
by king Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

15 Vidura of immeasurable wisdom,
in front of Keśava-Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas, said gently
to Drupada:

16 "O rājā!
Listen to my words.
Permit your sons and ministers
to listen too.
King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, his sons,
ministers and friends

17 Happily send you greetings.
He is overjoyed
at the news
of this newly-formed alliance.

18 Śāntanu's son mahā-learned Bhīṣma
and all the other Kauravas
have solicitously enquired
after your majesty's welfare.

19 Bharadvāja's son mahā-learned Droṇa,
your loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
embraces you in absence,
and wishes you well.

20 Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the other Kurus
consider themselves fortunate
by this alliance with you,
O king of Pāñcāla.

21 This alliance, O Yajñasena-Drupada,
makes them more happy
then the acquisition
of a whole new kingdom.

22 That being so, he requests
your majesty to send the Pāṇḍavas
to Hastināpura.
The Kauravas eagerly await them.

23 The bull-brave Pāṇḍavas
have been long absent from Hastināpura.
They and Kuntī must be eager
to see their city.

24 The ladies of the Kuru palace,
the citizens, the courtiers –
all are longing to get a glimpse
of Pāñcālī-Draupadī.

25 It is my earnest submission,
that you give
the Pāṇḍavas permission
to leave at their earliest convenience.

26 When you grant permission, O rājā,
I will send fast messengers to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and leave with Kuntī, the Pāṇḍavas,
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī ."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINE

1 Drupada said: "Vidura, you are right.
O most learned of men,
I am happy too
at our new alliance.

2 It is only right
that these mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas
should return to their home-town.
But I will not ask them to.

3 If Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma and Arjuna,
and Mādrī's bull-brave twins
Nakula and Sahadeva;

4 If Balarāma and Krishna,
well-versed in dharma,
so desire, let them go –
they are devoted to the Pāṇḍavas' welfare."

5 "O rājā," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"I and my brothers depend on you,
We are grateful to you
We will do as you advise."

6 "My feeling," said Vāsudeva-Krishna,
"is that you should go.
But we must not do anything contrary
to all-dharma-knowing rājā Drupada's wishes."

7 "In the circumstances," Drupada said,
"I agree with the opinion
of finest-of-Dāśārhas Puruṣottama-Krishna,
the mahā-powerful hero.

8 I know that as Kuntī's sons,
mahā-fortunate heroes,
are to me, so are they
to Vāsudeva-Krishna himself.

9 Pāṇḍu's son Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira himself
does not seek the Pāṇḍavas' welfare
so much as lion-among-men
Keśava-Krishna does,"

10 Some time later, mahā-radiant Vidura
went to Kuntī's room,
and touching her feet with his head,
he respectfully greeted her.
Seeing her younger brother-in-law,
Kuntī burst into tears.

11 She said, "Son of Vicitravīrya,
your sons
by your grace are still living.
You saved them from the fire

12 In the lacquer-house, and now
they go back with you.
A tortoise cares for its offspring
no matter where they are;

13 By such care alone are they able to thrive.
So you have cared for your sons,
O bull-brave Bharata.
You have saved them, *tāta,* dear one.

14 Like a crow looking after
a koel's young, I have looked
after your sons through many difficulties.
What should I do now? Please tell me."

15 She broke down, and sobbed uncontrollably.
Kṣatta-Vidura respectfully consoled her,
saying,
"No, no, don't cry.

16 No one in the world can harm
your mahā-powerful sons.
They and their allies will enter and recover
their kingdom soon. Don't cry."

17 (Vaiśampāyana continued):
Taking mahā-ātmaned Drupada's permission,
The Pāṇḍavas, accompanied
by Krishna and Vidura,

18 And the daughter of Drupada,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, and illustrious Kuntī,
happily proceeded to the city
of Hastināpura.

19 King Drupada gave them
a thousand excellent elephants
with golden shoulder-seats,
neck-trappings and prodding-rods;
they were painted with gold-wash
from the Jāmbū river;

20 Rutting juice streamed down their temples;
famous mahouts rode them;
they were equipped
with all manner of war-weapons.

21 He gave them one thousand four-horsed chariots,
decorated with gold and gem-work,
radiating splendour
wherever they went;

22 Fifty thousand noble-bred horses,
sporting garlands and gold harnesses;
to these he added ten thousand
lovely slave-girls, beautifully-attired.

23 Still not satisfied, he gave the Pāṇḍavas
one thousand slave-guards
expert in the use
of bow-and-arrow;

24 Beds, seats, vessels,
all made of gold;
rare drugs and medicines;
a multitude of cattle; –
all numbering a crore.
And he was pleased.

25 He gave more – a hundred palanquins,
and five hundred palanquin-bearers.
Such was the daughter-wealth
Drupada gave.

26 Dhṛṣṭadyumna personally helped his sister
Draupadī to climb into the palanquin,
while hundreds of musical instruments
sounded farewell.

27 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, receiving news
of the Pāṇḍavas' arrival,
instructed the Kauravas to go
and welcome them.

28 O Janamejaya of the Bharata race!
The great archer Citrasena,
Vikarṇa, the mighty bowman Droṇa,
and Gotama's son Kṛpa – all went.

29 The lustre of the Pāṇḍavas
increased the glory of the welcomers,
and both slowly
entered Hastināpura.

30 The eager citizens had decorated their streets
with festive details –
and expectantly awaited
the entry of the Pāṇḍavas.

31 Flowers everywhere.
Scented water.
Burning incense-sticks.
Fluttering pennants.

32 Conches blew.
Drums sounded.
The city echoed
with loud fanfare.

33 And as they proceeded,
the beloved Pāṇḍavas heard,
from all sides, peals of joy and welcome
from the ever-loyal citizens.

34 *The lion-among-men has returned!*
Yudhiṣṭhira is back!
The knower-of-dharma!
He treats us as his own!

35 *Mahārāja Pāṇḍu himself has returned!*
Beloved Pāṇḍu is back
from the forest!
He has come to help us!

36 *How fortunate we are*
to have them back!
The brave sons of Kuntī
have returned to our city!

37 *Because we have performed homa,*
because we have given in charity
because we have undergone tāpasyā, –
may the Pāṇḍavas
live in our city
for a hundred years!

38 The Pāṇḍavas touched the feet
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and mahā-ātmaned Bhīṣma
and of others
worthy of reverence.

39 They enquired after the welfare
of the citizens of Hastināpura.
Then, with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission,
they entered the palace.

40 Before they did so, Duryodhana's wife,
daughter of Kāśī's king,
came forward, accompanied
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's other daughters-in-law,

41 And welcomed Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
who shone like Srī-Lakṣmī herself.
To see Draupadī was to be blessed
with a vision of Śacī-Devī herself.

42 Duryodhana's wife received Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
warmly. Inside the palace,
Kuntī and Draupadī revered Gāndhārī,
who blessed them,

43 After embracing them.
Even as she hugged lotus-eyed
Pāñcālī-Draupadī, Gāndhārī thought:
She will be cause of my sons' deaths.
Subala's daughter Gāndhārī
quickly summoned Vidura, and said:

44 "Kṣattā-Vidura, show Kuntī and her daughter-in-law
to the palace-quarters
reserved for the Pāṇḍavas.
See that the *muhūrta*

45 And star-combinations are auspicious
for their entering, for Kuntī
must be provided every opportunity
to find happiness here."

46 Kṣattā-Vidura did as instructed.
Friends and kinsmen at that time
paid special attention
to the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas.

47 The chief citizens and merchants
of the country honoured them.
On orders from Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Bhīṣma, Karṇa, Droṇa, Bāhlīka

48 And his sons paid homage to the Pāṇḍavas.
Looking after their every need
during their stay was Vidura,
whom Dhṛtarāṣṭra had given full powers
to attend to the comfort
of the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas.

49 After they were completely rested,
the puissant, shining heroes
were summoned by rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma.

50 "Listen carefully, Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"to what I tell you and your brothers.
It was with my approval

51 That Pāṇḍu extended the borders of this kingdom
and conquered almost the whole earth.
My brother Pāṇḍu
was a mahā-powerful king.

52 Be like him, Yudhiṣṭhira.
Do as I tell you.
My sons are headstrong and proud.
They will never listen to me.

53 Rather then risk a quarrel with them,
do this –
Go to Khāṇḍavaprastha,
and leave them to themselves.

54 No one will disturb you there.
Take half the kingdom and go.
As thunderbolt-wielding Indra guards the gods,
Pārtha-Arjuna will protect you.

55 And you, Kṣattā-Vidura, without delay
prepare for the installation
of Yudhiṣṭhira as king,
which I personally will supervise.

56 The most learned Brahmins.
the most prominent citizens,
and the leaders of the people
should be specially invited.

57 Have the proclamation issued immediately –
offer *dakṣīṇā*
to Brahmins of a thousand cows
and prosperous villages.

58 Order two sceptres and crowns
to be made,
along with beautiful arm-ornaments,
pearl necklaces, ear-pendants,

59 Gold waist-bands and girdles, medallions,
and other body-jewels.
Arrange for one thousand and eight
Brahmin-driven elephants,

60 Who, guided by *purohitas*, will fetch water
from the Gaṅgā,
for Yudhiṣṭhira's lustrations.
Adorn Yudhiṣṭhira on the royal elephant

61 Splendidly caparisoned and glittering
with head and temple jewels,
and followed by Brahmins and citizens
singing royal praises.

62 That is how Yudhiṣṭhira of the Ajamīḍhas
should be crowned.
Pāṇḍu's kindness to me
in giving me the kingdom
I will repay by having Yudhiṣṭhira
installed in Hastināpura."

63 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and Kṣattā-Vidura said:
"Sādhu! Sādhu! Excellent! Excellent!"
Krishna said, "O Indra-among-rājās,
your decision is noble
and will increase Kuru glory.
Fulfil it as soon as possible, mahārāja."

64 And Vārṣṇeya-Kṛṣṇa began pressing him
to hurry with the installation.
Vidura organised the preparations
exactly as instructed.

65 Coincidentally, Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa happened
to come to the palace then;
all the Pāṇḍavas greeted him
with the deepest pūjā-respect.

66 After discussions with Veda-wise Brahmins
and leaders of the people,
and with Krishna's approval, Vyāsa supervised
the coronation arrangements.

67 Krpa, Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Dhaumya, Vyāsa,
Keśava-Krishna, Bāhlīka and Somadatta,
led by Brahmins well-versed
in the four Vedas,
participated in the magnificent installation
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

68 All of them blessed him, saying,
"May your exploits win you
the whole earth! May you perform
a massive *rājasūya*
and distribute *dakṣiṇā* to thousands
of grateful Brahmins!

69 May you protect your friends and kinsmen
and bring them happiness!"
Yudhiṣṭhira, resplendent in royal regalia,
donated uncountable

70 Sums of wealth.
He mounted the royal elephant
under a giant white umbrella;
following him was the city's populace.

71 He looked like Indra himself
surrounded by the other gods.
Circling the city limits of Hastināpura,
he re-entered,

72 To the joyous acclamation
of hundreds of thousands of citizens.
His friends and kinsmen
applauded loudly. Seeing this,

73 Gāndhārī's son Duryodhana and his brothers
chafed with displeasure.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra noticed this,
and said to Yudhiṣṭhira
in the presence of Vāsudeva-Krishna
and the Kauravas:

74 "O Kaurava descendant!
Today you have achieved the throne
reserved only for the invincible.
Go this very day to Khāṇḍavaprastha.

75 Mighty Pururavas, Āyu,
Nahuṣa and Yāyati were all rulers
of Khāṇḍavaprastha.
It is known as the capital of the Pauravas.

76 In later times, however, Khāṇḍavaprastha
was razed to the ground
by the greed of Budha's sons.
Restore it to its former glory, Yudhiṣṭhira.

77 Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras
are ready to go with you.
If you have faith,
others will help you in the task

78 Of restoring Khāṇḍavaprastha's greatness.
O defectless son of Kuntī!
The kingdom of Khāṇḍavaprastha
is replete with resources of all kinds.
I urge you again,
go there."

79 The Pāṇḍavas consented
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
respectfully took leave of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and others,
and left for

80 The dense forests of Khāṇḍavaprastha,
agreeing to take it
as their half of the kingdom,
Krishna led them.

81 Vāsudeva-Jagannātha-Krishna mentally
propitiated Vāsava-Indra; and Indra,
lord of the gods, summoned Viśvakarman
and said to him:

82 *From today, O mahā-learned World-Maker,*
the enchanting, heavenly forest-land
of Khāṇḍavaprastha will be known
as Indraprastha.

83 Inspired by Indra's order,
Viśvakarman approached Keśava-Krishna
in Khāṇḍavaprastha, praṇāma-ed him and said,
"Command me, my lord."

84 Vāsudeva-Krishna said, "Viśvakarman!
World-Fashioner! Construct for Kuru-rāja
Yudhiṣṭhira a mahā-city in Khāṇḍavaprastha
to match Indra's capital."

85 With Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa's help,
the mahā-chariot- hero Pāṇḍavas chose
a sacred, auspicious spot, and measured out,
with ritual observances, the foundation.

86 Sea-wide moats surrounded it.
Tall, cloud white, moon-shining walls
rose straight up,
glittering in the sun.

87 Like the city of Bhogavatī of the Nāgas,
Indraprastha glowed with splendour.
The windows stretched wide
on both sides,

88 Like the spread pinions of Garuḍa;
the gates were like soaring clouds,
Mandara-mountain-high;
absolutely impregnable.

89 Spokes and other weapons studded
the gates, like snake-tongues;
on the battlements stood heavily-armed
watchful sentinels.

90 The arsenal was stocked
with a multitude of war-weapons –
thousands of grappling hooks
and fire-throwing *śataghnis*
and iron-wheeled missile-carriers.
They adorned Indraprastha.

91 The streets were wide and well-planned;
it was indeed a divine city,
like lightning-charged cloud-masses:
Indraprastha!

92 In a pleasing, specially-selected spot
was the Pāṇḍava-palace,
glittering with every luxurious adornment,
like Kubera's palace.

93 Many Brahmins, renowned linguists
and learned in the Vedas,
came to Indraprastha
with the intention of settling there.

94 From all corners of the world
merchants flocked to the city.
Skilled craftsmen chose Indraprastha
to earn their living.

95 In this capital were planted groves
of mango, hog-plum,
kadamba, aśoka,
and sweet-smelling champak,

96 *Punnāga*, nāga-flowers,
and bread-fruit trees; *sāl*-trees;
palmyra, *tāmāla, vakula,*
and the *ketaka.*

97 Blossomed and fruited,
they bent under the weight
of fruit and *amalakas,*
lodhras and aṅkolas;

98 Rose-apples; trumpet-flower trees;
kubjakas, atimuktas,
red oleanders; coral trees,
and many others –

99 All of them bright with flowers,
and filled with birds;
resounding with intoxicated cries
of peacocks and kokilas.

100 Many mirror-bright pleasure-houses
were constructed; many bowers
with creepers; many artificial garden-terraces;
many freshwater lakes;

101 Many tanks with floating
soft-scented lotuses, lilies,
and swans, ducks and *cakravāka* birds;
many large and overflowing ponds.

102 The city was packed with members
of all the four castes.
Apart from skilled artisans,
there were always eminent visitors,

103 In fact, the splendour of the city
was a reflection
of the splendour of its people.
Elephants, camels, cows, bullocks,

104 Asses, goats and other animals
were there in plenty.
There were sādhus and mahātmās
in Viśvakarman's city,

105 In Indra-splendid Indraprastha.
With Vyāsa's permission,
Yudhiṣṭhira followed purohita Dhaumya
past thirty-two gates,

106 To the main entrance of the palace
called Vardhamāna.
Conches blew; thousands of Brahmins
shouted *Victory! Victory!*

107 Ascetics, bards, and praise-chanters
sang Yudhiṣṭhira's accomplishments,
as his elephant entered
the main gate,

108 Where the concourse of assembled visitors
paid tribute to Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas.
Indraprastha flourished.

109 And the joy of the Pāṇḍavas
increased daily
in that splendid, prospering kingdom
of good men and women.

110 This is how the Pāṇḍavas,
with the dharma-guided help
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Bhīṣma,
became rulers of Khāṇḍavaprastha.

111 Each was like an Indra in strength,
each bow-expert Pāṇḍava –
and the city was like
the Nāgas' capital Bhogavatī.

112 Yudhiṣṭhira honoured Vyāsa and Viśvakarman,
and saw them leave.
After they left,
Yudhiṣṭhira said to Krishna:

113 "It is all the result of your grace,
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna –
this great good fortune of ours.
Your grace has made this land prosper.

114 Your grace has given us the throne.
Mādhava-Krishna, be with us.
We do not know Pāṇḍu.
You are our mother and father, our god.

115 O defectless one!
What you think good for us,
advise us to do that.
And we will do what you tell us to do."

116 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied,
"O mahā-fortune-favoured ones!
Your sva-dharma has given you this kingdom.
This is your ancestral kingdom –
Prabhu Yudhiṣṭhira,
who else should rule it?

117 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are ill-minded.
But what can they do?
Continue to rule over your kingdom
with the strength of dharma.

118 Be respectful to Brahmins,
is my brief dharma-based advice.
Soon Nārada will come here.
Receive him with courtesy, do as he advises."

119 Janārdana-Krishna went to Kuntī and,
paying his respects to her, said gently,
"It is time for me now to go.
Namo-astu te."

120 Kuntī said, "O Keśava-Krishna,
the suffering I endured in the lac-house,
even my father does not know.
O Govinda-Krishna,

121 Through your kindness we have
succeeding in crossing
our river of sorrows. You are a friend
of the forlorn and helpless.

122 Your darshan has saved us from destruction.
Remember us, O mahā-wise one,
Knowing you remember us Pāṇḍavas,
we continue to live."

123 Vāsudeva-Krishna assured Kuntī
he would always keep the Pāṇḍavas
in mind, and respectfully took leave
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

124 Having established the Pāṇḍavas
firmly in Indraprastha,
Keśava-Krishna and Balarāma returned
to the city of Dvārakā.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TEN

1 “O tapasyā-wealthy one,”
asked Janamejaya,
“what did the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas do
after obtaining Khāṇḍavaprastha?

2 My ancestors the Pāṇḍavas
were all men of high truth.
How was their *dharma-patni* Draupadī
able to serve them all with equal care?

3 How is it that they did not fall out
over one wife, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī ?
They were all famous rulers –
what happened?

4 What I would like to know, O tapasyā-wealthy one,
is how they behaved towards each other,
and how they behaved with Draupadī –
and in detail.”

5 After getting half the kingdom from Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
were happy in Khaṇḍavaprastha.

6 The mahā-ascetic and truth-firm Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers
ruled the kingdom with all the resources
of dharma they commanded.

7 They were able to rout their enemies.
Mahā-wise, truthful, and devoted to dharma,
the heroic Pāṇḍavas
passed their days happily.

8 Ensconced in luxurious royal seats,
the bull-brave heroes fulfilled
all the duties required
of conscientious kings.

9 One day, while they were holding court,
the celestial ṛṣi Narada,
in the course of his travels,
chanced to visit the mahā-ātmaned brothers.

10 He came by the skyey path,
guarded by the planets,
over which Suparṇa-Garuḍa roams,
flooded with sunlight and moonlight,
protected by the maharṣis. Impossible
for non-ascetics to travel this path.

11 Innumerably-worshipped,
the mahā-tapasyā ṛṣi Narada came there
after visiting glorious cities and kingdoms
in the three worlds.

12 Narada was master of the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas and other branches
of knowledge – he was a Brahma-ṛṣi mahā-muni
learned in law and politics.

13 With his power of dharma
he had achieved the Paramātman.
He was pure, serene, sweet-speaking,
and of an unassuming disposition,

14 He was acquainted with the lore
of gods, *dānavas,* and humans.
He was fearless.
He was proficient
in all observances of dharma,
in Ṛk, Sāma, and Yajur-Vedas.

15 He was straight, tall, and fair-skinned.
He spent his time travelling.
His head sported a hiar-tuft.
He wore a divine robe

16 Given to him by Mahendra-Indra himself –
shining and spotlessly clean.
Nārada who was like Bṛhaspati himself
come to Yudhiṣṭhira's palace.

17 Narada was supremely knowledgeable
in the Saṁhitās, and the dharma of mankind,
fluent in the chanting of songs
from the Sāma-Veda.

18 He knew whose duty was what,
and when. Not only dharma,
he was acquainted with all the arts
of material progress. He could argue

19 Subtleties in dharma and artha.
He was also learned
in the various kinds of dharma
and in the science of semantics

20 He was an excellent polemicist,
who could expatiate
on the multiple meanings of a single word,
the single meaning of many words
and the varying meanings
of different words

21 He was respected for his advice
to the four castes
in all difficult matters.
Accents, innuendoes, prosodic rhythms,

22 Roots, declensions, conjugations,
word-combinations, verse-feet;
action in emergency, insight into secrets,
intuitive wisdom –

23 He possessed knowledge of these.
Implicit and explicit suggestions,
emotional nuances – all these
he caught immediately.

24 He knew all about Kāla-dharma;
open and hidden knowledge
was familiar to him. The words
of the śāstras were known to him.

25 He knew the five sound-productions
and basic vowels –
guttural, palatal, labial, dental, guttural-labial;
a, i, u, ṛ, lṛ.

26 Yudhiṣṭhira saw him coming,
and stepped down from the throne.
Nārada sat on a comfortable seat,
after which

27 Yudhiṣṭhira offered the customary *orghya*
with his own hands.
Devarṣi Nārada accepted the honour
with great pleasure.

28 Blessing Yudhiṣṭhira,
Nārada said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, "Sit down."
Only when asked, did Yudhiṣṭhira return
to his royal seat.

29 He sent word to Draupadī
that Nārada had arrived.
Draupadī purified herself,
and came respectfully

30 To where Nārada and the Pāṇḍavas
were sitting.
She did *añjali* at the feet of Nārada,
and stood by silently

31 With joined palms in front of Nārada,
her dress covering properly
her body. The truth-speaking,
dharmātmā ṛṣi,

32 Illustrious Nārada,
blessed the faultless lady and said.
"You may now go in."
She left.

33 When Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī had gone,
the bhagavān ṛṣi turned to Yudhiṣṭhira
sitting at the head of the Pāṇḍavas,
and said to all of them:

34 "The illustrious princess of Pāñcāla
is your common dharma-*patni*.
Decide among yourselves a means
so that you do not ever quarrel.

35 Long ago there were two brothers.
Sunda and Upasunda.
No one had power to kill them.
Only they could kill each other.

36 They ruled the same kingdom,
lived in the same palace,
sat on the same seat,
slept on the same bed,
ate from the same plate;
yet they killed each other over Tilottamā.

37 Therefore, Yudhiṣṭhira, take special care
to nourish your affection for each other.
Make some rule
to see you do not fall apart."

38 "Whose sons, mahā-muni," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"were Sunda and Upasunda?
How did they they quarrel?
Why did they kill each other?

39 Was Tilottama an apsarā?
Which god's daughter was she?
How did they get so maddened with kāma
as to kill each other?

40 Tell us, rich-in-tapasyā Brahmin,
the entire story,
exactly as it happened.
We can hardly contain our curiosity."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 Well, listen carefully, Yudhiṣṭhira,
you and your brothers
(replied Narada),
while I unfold this ancient story.

2 In the very distant past,
a mahā-antigod Daitya king
named Nikumbha was born
in the race of Hiraṇyakaśipu.

3 He had two sons, Sunda and Upasunda,
both great Daitya chiefs,
mahā-powerful, virile,
fierce and cruel.

4 Two sons with one aim –
everything they did,
they did together – they suffered,
and were happy together.

5 Their words and deeds both
were mutually agreeable –
they ate together
and they even travelled together.

6 So identical were their habits
they seemed to be one person
divided into two.
Mahā-powerful and united, they grew up,

7 One-minded in all things,
eager to dominate the three worlds.
Together they went to the Vindhya mountains
where they practised severe tapasyā.

8 They persevered in their tapasyā
for a long time,
and finally achieved the highest perfection
of asceticism.

9 Smeared with dust all over,
thirst-and-hunger-oppressed,
clad in tree-bark, living on air,
standing on their toes,
they cut off bits of their flesh and offered them
in the fire. They stood stock-still
for long stretches of time,
hands upraised and eyes unmoving.

10 A marvel took place!
The Vindhya mountain range,
heated by the intensity of their tapasyā,
began emitting vapours.

11 The gods, alarmed,
tried every conceivable means
of obstructing and frustrating
their powerful tapasyā.

12 They offered repeated temptations
of gems, jewels, lovely girls;
but the two brothers, firm in their mahā-vows,
remained unshaken.

13 The gods spun the delusions of māyā
in front of the mahātmas,
who saw their sisters, mothers,
wives and other kinsfolk,

14 With dishevelled hair, ornaments and dresses,
fleeing in terror,
pursued closely by a fierce,
spear-wielding rākṣasa.

15 And they were all screaming
Help us! Help us!
But the two mahā-vow-rooted ṛṣis
remained unshaken.

16 All this having failed to distract
either of the two,
the visions of women vanished as suddenly
as they had materialised.

17 Then Brahmā Pitāmaha himself
appeared before the mahā-antigods,
and the world-welfare-wishing deity
asked them what boon they wanted.

18 Both Sunda and Upasunda
stood up together
on seeing Brahmā Pitāmaha.
and joined their palms in *añjali*.

19 Both brothers said in one voice
to the Lord God,
"O Pitāmaha, if our worship
has in any way pleased you,

20 And if, O Lord, you wish
to favour us, give us knowledge
of all weapons, of māyā;
give us incalculable strength,
and power to change shape at will,
and make us immortal."

21 "Immortality excepting," assured Brahmā,
"you will have your desire granted.
Ask for a special death
by which you will become immortal.

22 You aimed only at lordship of the three worlds
when you began your tapaṣyā –
I cannot therefore
grant you immortality.

23 O Indras of the Daityas!
You have what you desired
before you began
the tapasyā:
lordship of the three worlds.
You cannot have immortality.

24 "O Pitāmaha," said Sunda and Upasunda,
"let us not fear death
from any creature, animate or inanimate,
in the three worlds.
If we must fear,
let us fear only each other."

25 "Granted," said Brahmā Pitāmaha.
"What you have desired
and prnyed for, will be.
Your death will be even as you wish."

26 Pitāmaha Brahma granted their boon,
and they ended their tapasyā.
Then he went back
to the realm of Brahmaloka.

27 As a result of this boon,
having became unkillable
by any creature in the three worlds,
they returned to their kingdom.

28 Theit friends and kinsfolk
were overjoyed
when they learnt of the special boon
achieved by the Daityas.

29 They cut off their matted hair,
wore crowns,
adorned themselves with expensive ornaments
and put on glittering dresses.

30 They celebrated the fullmoon Kaumudi Festival
at odd hours,
whenever it pleased them
– and their friends and kinsfolk applauded.

31 The only words one could hear
in their palace were:
"Eat!" "Gobble!" "Drink!" "Sing!"
"Enjoy yourself!"

32 From all sides rose a cacophony
of merrymaking,
hand-clapping, and feasting –
till the city was deafened by the Daityas.

33 Assuming all manner of forms,
the Daityas gave themselves up to revelry.
A year passed.
To them it seemed but a day.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWELVE

1 When the orgy of feasting ended;
Sunda and Upasunda,
eager to rule the three worlds,
organised their army.

2 Encouraged by the approval
of their friends, kinsmen, elders,
ministers, and all the Daitya race,
they performed the preliminary rites
and set out on the night
when Maghā was ascendant.

3 A huge army of Daityas,
dressed in armour,
wielding clubs, axes, spears and maces,
launched the offensive.

4 The *cāraṇas* chanted auspicious victory-verses;
and the leaders,
confident of success,
marched joyously ahead.

5 Impatient for battle, capable
of going anywhere they wanted,
the two Daityas shot upwards
to the mansions of the gods.

6 Frightened by their approach
(because they had heard of
Lord Brahmā's boon-giving), the gods
fled heaven and went to Brahmā.

7 The stalwart Daityas overran
the realm of Indra
and scattered the forces of the yakṣas
and rākṣasas; returning,

8 The two mahā-chariot-heroes
routed the underworld Nāgas,
the dwellers in the ocean,
and all the *mleccha* tribes.

9 Impelling them was the great ambition
of subjugating the three worlds.
They summoned their soldiers,
and cruelly said:

10 "The royal ṛṣis and Brahmins
propitiate the gods
with fire-offerings and mahā-yajñas,
and increase their strength –

11 They are enemies of us anti-gods –
destroy them! From now on,
our single aim must be to combine forces
and annihilate them."

12 Mustering their armies strong
on the eastern shores of the great ocean,
the two anti-god brothers spread out
in different directions.

13 First, they slaughtered all yajña performers,
and the Brahmins
who assisted in such yajñas.
They reached out further,

14 And consigned to the ocean
all the sacred fires
lit in the āśramas
of renowned pure-ātmaned munis.

15 The curses of the angry mahātmās.
had no effect at all,
because of Brahmā's boon;
and the depredations continued.

16 When the Brahmins saw
that their curses were as futile
as arrows shot at stones,
abandoning their rituals they fled.

17 Like snakes slithering to safety
at the approach of Vinatā's son Garuḍa,
the Brahmins, even the most self-disciplined
and dedicated, fled.

18 The āśramas were desecrated,
their sacred vessels and the altars smashed.
The whole earth emptied,
as if obliterated by Kāla.

19 With the disappearance of the rsis,
the two terrible mahā-antigods
embarked on plans of further pillage,
and assumed different shapes.

20 Willing themselves into infuriated elephants
on a rampage,
temple-juices streaming, they trampled ṛṣis
hiding in mountain-caves.

21 They became lions!
Tigers!
Invisible!
They wrought havoc,
Killing ṛṣis
Wherever they went.

22 Yajñas and studies stopped.
Kings and Brahmins were butchered.
All festivals,
all rituals ended.

23 The people moaned *Hai*! *Hai*!
Buying and selling ceased.
The gods stopped working,
holy deeds and weddings stopped.

24 The fields were not tilled,
the cattle not tended;
cities and āśramas emptied of humans;
bones and skeletons
littered the face of the earth.
A gruesome spectacle!

25 Rituals honouring the pitṛs,
the sacred chants of *vaṣaṭ*
at yajñas – all stopped.
The earth was a distressing sight.

26 The sun, moon, planets, stars, constellations,
and the dwellers of heaven
were revolted by the terrible deeds
of Sunda and Upasunda.

27 Conquering all the points of heaven
by their cruel carnage,
the two Daityas ruled in Kurukṣetra
unchallenged.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 Nārada continued:
The usually serene and self-controlled
heavenly ṛṣis the Siddhas,
and other noble ṛṣis were agitated
by the ruthless massacre.

2 Their minds, passions, and bodies
were totally subdued;
yet, moved by compassion,
they hurried to Brahmā Pitamahā.

3 They saw Pitāmaha Brahmā
seated among the gods,
surrounded by the perfected Siddhas
and the Brahma-ṛṣis.

4 They saw Mahādeva-Śiva;
Agni and Vāyu,
Candra, Āditya, Śakra-Indra, and others
devoted to divine meditation.

5 The Vaikhānasas, Vālakhilyas,
Vānaprasthas, Maricipas,
Ajas, Avimuḍhas,
and other tapasyā-refulgent ascetics –

6 All of them approached Brahmā
with humility
and in deep anguish
at the sufferings of the earth.

7 They narrated before him the story
of Sunda and Upasunda's carnage;
one by one,
the ṛṣis recounted

8 Details of the afflictions
perpetrated on the world,
how they were perpetrated,
and in what order.

9 They pleaded before Brahmā Pitāmaha
for help,
and Brahmā, listening carefully
to all that they said,

10 Reflected for some time;
then he decided
that the brothers had to be removed.
He summoned Viśvakarman.

11 Pitāmaha Brahmā of mahā-tapasyā said to him,
"Viśvakarman,
create a girl with beauty to ravish
any human heart."

12 Viśvakarman namaskāra-ed,
accepting the command.
After repeated meditation,
he fashioned a celestial girl.

13 First he collected whatever
there was lovely
in the moving and unmoving life
of the three worlds.

14 Next he covered the divine girl's body
with crores of gems
till she became
a walking scintillation.

15 He created her with fastidious care,
till she became the paragon
of all lovely girls
in the three worlds.

16 There was no part of her lovely body
that did not,
by superabundance of beauty,
dazzle and delight the eye.

17 She was like Śrī, goddess of beauty,
in person;
whoever so much as looked at her,
was captivated.

18 Because every little *tila*, every little part of her
was adazzle with *uttama*,
the finest gems,
Brahmā Pitamaha named her Tilottamā.

19 She namaskāra-ed Brahma in añjali
and said, "Bhuteśa,
lord of creatures, what should I do?
Why was I created?"

20 "Tilottamā," said Brahmā Pitamaha,
"go, sweet girl, to the anti-gods
Sunda and Upasunda, and seduce them
with your loveliness.

21 Behave so that
as soon as they see you,
they get infatuated with your beauty
and start quarrelling."

22 Agreeing, Tilottamā namaskāra-ed
and took leave of Brahma,
and half-circled the assembly of gods
in *pradakṣiṇa*.

23 Bhagavān Brahmā sat facing the east;
Maheśvara-Śiva the south;
the other gods were facing north,
and the ṛṣis faced all directions.

24 While she was doing *pradakṣiṇa*
during her leave-taking,
Indra and Bhagavān Sthānu-Śiva succeeded
in controlling their feelings.

25 But Śiva so longed to see her that,
when she came beside him,
a second Śiva-face, lotus-eyed,
appeared on the south.

26 When she came behind him,
still another appeared on the west;
when she came north,
a fourth face appeared on the north.

27 And Mahendra-Indra similarly sprouted
a thousand eyes, large and inflamed,
before, behind,
and on both his sides.

28 This is how Sthānu-Mahādeva-Śiva
came to have four faces,
and Indra, slayer of Bala,
a thousand eyes.

29 All the gods and mahā-ṛṣis
turned their heads
in the direction of Tilottamā
during her respectful half-circling.

30 Only the eyes of the Supreme Deity,
Brahmā-Pitāmaha, remained fixed;
all the others lingered
on the beauty of her body.

31 When she left, all the gods
and supreme ṛṣis felt assured
that the task entrusted to her
would be fulfilled.

32 When Tilottamā departed,
the Creator of the worlds, Brahmā,
permitted the assembly of gods and ṛṣis
to leave.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 When the whole earth had been
subjugated by them,
the two Daityas relaxed, considering
their mission as completed.

2 They looted the wealth
of the gods, gandharvas, yakṣas,
nāgas, rākṣasas, and kings,
and they exulted.

3 With no rivals to oppose them,
they became indolent like the gods,
and gave themselves up
to sensual enjoyments.

4 They had their fill of perfumes,
food and drink, garlands,
bewitching girls, and a host
of other fleshly delights.

5 Like the gods they aimlessly sported
in woods and forests,
on hills, in gardens and houses –
wherever their mood took them.

6 One day they happened to go
to the Vindhya plateau,
lush with flowering śāla-trees,
in search of enjoyment

7 They glutted themselves
with every conceivable pleasure,
sitting on an exquisite couch,
and fondling ravishingly beautiful girls.

8 Eager to please the two brothers,
the girls began dancing
and singing sweetly their praises
to the accompaniment of music.

9 Draped in a single red dress revealing
her heart-enchanting beauty,
Tilottamā came there,
ostensibly to gather flowers.

10 Plucking *karṇikāras* that blossomed
along the river's edge,
she slowly approached the spot
where the two mahā-antigods were sitting.

11 Their eyes were bloodshot with the liquor
they had been drinking.
The moment they saw the lovely-thighed beauty,
they lusted for her.

12 They rose from the couch,
and approached her.
Both were roused to passion,
both wanted her.

13 Sunda grasped the right hand of Tilottamā,
lady of lovely eyebrows,
and Upasunda pulled her
by her left hand.

14 Drunk with their special boon,
drunk with their body's power,
drunk with the booty they had amassed,
drunk with the wine;

15 Drunk with desire,
each curled his eyebrows in fury
and anger. Tilottamā stood by;
watching with keen eyes,

16 Pulling their gaze on her.
Her right glance entrapped Sunda,
and with her left she was able
to fascinate Upasunda.

17 She was fragrant,
she had resplendent ornaments,
she was ravishingly beautiful.
The two brothers stared at each other.

18 Sunda shouted, "She is my wife! –
She is your guru!"
"No!" retorted Upasunda. "My wife! –
Your daughter-in-law!"

19 "Mine! "Mine!" "Not yours!"
They shouted.
Her beauty had driven them mad.
Friendship and affection were forgotten.

20 They rushed for their maces.
Driven insane by passion,
they picked up their fierce,
annihilating maces.

21 "I first!" "I first!"
They screamed and lunged
at each other. Struck by the maces,
they fell on the ground.

22 Their blood-drenched bodies looked
like two fallen suns.
The dancing girls fled in fear.
The Daityas fled to the under-world.

23 Bhagavān Pitamahal, the gods,
and the ṛṣis came
to the spot and were pleased
with Tilottamā's success.

24 Brahmā granted her a special boon.
Before she could say anything,
he praised her,
saying.

25 "Lovely one, you will roam
in the worlds in the orbit of the sun.
Your loveliness will be such
that no one will be able to resist it."

26 Then Brahmā Pitāmaha,
lord of all the worlds,
installed Indra lord of the three worlds,
and departed to the realm called Brahmaloka.

27 This is how the two anti-gods,
intimate and united once,
destroyed each other, maddened by their lust
for Tilottamā.

28 I tell you this because I love you all.
O excellent Bharata-descendants,
if you wish to please me,
arrange now so that none of you
ever quarrels over Draupadī
(ended Nārada).

29 Advised by maharṣi Nārada
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas
came to the following agreement:

30 Defectless Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī will cohabit
with each Pāṇḍava for one year.
If any brother surprises Draupadī
while she is with another,
he will accept forest-exile for twelve years
as a brahmacārī.

31 When the dharma-abiding Pāṇḍavas
had agreed to this,
mahā-muni Nārada was pleased,
and left them.

32 At Nārada's suggestion,
that is what the Pāṇḍavas decided
regarding Draupadī, to prevent
any misunderstanding on her account.

33 And I have repeated the facts,
O Janamejaya, exactly
as they occurred at the time
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION TWO HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 The Pāṇḍavas continued to live
in Khāṇḍavaprastha,
and subjugated many kings
by force of superior arms.

2 And Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī carefully attended
to the needs of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons –
the five lion-like,
immeasurably powerful brothers.

3 Like the river Sarasvatī
delighting in elephants,
who delight in the Sarasvatī,
she and they delighted in each other.

4 Because the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas ruled
according to the dictates of dharma,
all the Kauravas, freed from faults,
prospered daily.

5 One day, O lord of the earth,
a gang of cattle-thieves
happened to steal some cows
belonging to a Brahmin.

6 His wealth stolen,
the Brahmin lost his temper,
rushed to Khāṇḍavaprastha,
and started blaming the Pāṇḍavas.

7 "Thieves! Thieves!" he shouted.
"What are you doing, O Pāṇḍavas?
Chase the scoundrels
who are stealing your cattle!

8 The sacred ghee of a gentle Brahmin's rituals –
stolen by crows!
The open cave of a lion
attacked by jackals!

9 What's he but a criminal rājā
who takes one-sixth
of his subjects' produce
but doesn't protect them?

10 A Brahmin's wealth looted by thieves!
Dharma desecrated!
O help me!
Take up arms!"

11 He stood there, lamenting profusely,
blaming the Pāṇḍavas.
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
heard him,

12 And immediately consoled him,
saying, "Don't fear."
Dharmarāja and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
were in the arms-room

13 At that time, and Arjuna was placed
in the dilemma
of whether to disturb their privacy
or ignore the Brahmin's pleas.

14 The Brahmin's weeping words
affected him deeply.
He paused,
and thought sadly:

15 *This poor ascetic Brahmin's wealth*
is being looted!
It is certainly my duty
to help him.

16 *If I turn away a helpless man*
weeping at our gate,
my callousness will bring mahā-adharma
on lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 *And word of our indifference*
will spread in the kingdom.
Great adharma will fall
on us.

18 *But – if I now enter disrespectfully the room,*
the promise
I made before rājā Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
will be broken . . . .

19 *If I enter the room,*
I must accept exile.
But I will do it! I will enter!
I will ignore the promise,

20 *Even though adharma touch me.*
Higher than body-suffering
is dedication to dharma.
I'll die in the forest if I have to.

21 His mind made up, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
entered the room
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
spoke briefly to Yudhiṣṭhira,

22 Brought out his bow and quiver,
and cheerfully told the Brahmin,
"Hurry! They can't have gone very far.
Come with me, Brahmin!

23 I will personally accompany you,
and restore to you
your lost cattle. Hurry!
We have no time to lose."

24 Armed with bow and arrows,
clad in armour, waving the pennant,
mahā-muscled Arjuna drove off in the chariot.
Routing the thieves, he returned the cattle.

25 Bringing lustre to the Pāṇḍava-name
by restoring the cattle
to the grateful Brahmin,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna,

26 Heroic Savyasācī-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
returned to the capital,
bowed to the elders,
and was applauded by them.

27 He said to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:
"I have broken my vow.
I saw you and Draupadī together.
I must expiate my misdeed,

28 And go into forest-exile."
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira heard
this sudden, displeasing confession
and was disturbed;

29 In a sad and agitated voice
he asked, "Why? Why?"
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira continued, speaking sadly
to his curly-haired brother

30 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, "Defectless one,
don't you think my word in this
is of some importance?
Listen to me.

31 Brave one!
I know why you entered the room,
and you think I find it disagreeable.
But truly I don't.

32 No fault attaches if a younger brother
enters a room where an elder brother
and his wife are together;
but an elder brother goes against custom
if he disturbs the privacy
of a younger brother and his wife.

33 Listen to me, therefore,
O mahā-muscled hero! Do as I say.
You haven't fallen from dharma,
you haven't offended me at all."

34 "You yourself have taught me,"
Arjuna said, "that dharma
is not practised by splitting hairs.
May truth help me – I am firm.

35 Give me leave to go into forest-exile,
illustrious brother,
for without your permission
I will not do anything."

36 With rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
Arjuna prepared to go into exile
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
for twelve years.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SIXTEEN

1 Kaurava-glory-increasing mahā-muscled Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
left with many mahā-ātmaned Brahmins
learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,

2 With Brahmins who were dedicated
to meditation on the philosophy
of the Adhyātmā;
with alms-dependent brahmācarīs,
with devoted Bhagavad-bhaktas;
with sūtas skilled in the Purāṇas,

3 With famed bards and ministrels,
with world-renouncing dwellers-in-the-forest,
and with sweet-speaking
Brahmin narrators of stories;

4 And many others. With them,
Arjuna travelled the length and breadth
of the land, like Vāsava-Indra
in the company of the Maruts.

5 Finest-among-men Arjuna enjoyed
visiting the entrancing sites
of holy pilgrimages, in forests,
near lakes, rivers and seas.

6 And when, O bull-brave Bharata,
he arrived at the source
of the Gaṅgā, he almost decided
to stay there.

7 Listen, Janamejaya,
to the splendid feat
that Arjuna, the pure-ātmaned hero
of the Pāṇḍavas, performed there.

8 Arjuna, son of Kuntī,
and the Brahmins who accompanied him
performed many agnihotṛs
near the source of the Gaṅgā.

9 O king! As a result
of the wise, rigid-vowed,
unswerving dharma of the Brahmins
in performing daily sacrifices

10 And rituals on the Gaṅgā's banks,
as a result of their libations of ghee
and offerings of flowers,
the Gaṅgā-valley radiated beauty.

11 The bull-brave-Pāṇḍava Arjuna
went to the Gaṅgā one day,
in the presence of the Brahmins,
to perform his ablutions.

12 He had finished offering water
to the spirits of his ancestors
and was emerging from the river
in order to light the agnihotṛ,

13 When, O mahārāja Janamejaya, the daughter
of the rājā of the Nagas, Ulūpī,
inflamed with love for him,
pulled him under.

14 Pāṇḍava Arjuna noticed a fire in the dwelling
of the Nāga chief, Kaurava,
so he performed the agnihotṛ
with the proper rituals

15 Right there; as a result,
the god Agni was greatly pleased,
seeing Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
so devoted to his cause.

16 When he had finished the agnihotṛ rituals,
Kuntī's son
turned to Ulūpī, the Nagā-rājā's daughter,
smiled, and said:

17 "Such boldness!
O shy and lovely girl!
Tell me, whose daughter are you,
and where am I?"

18 "O rājā," she replied,
"I am the daughter of Kaurava
of the Nāgā race of Airāvata.
My name is Ulūpī.

19 O tiger-among-men! When I saw you enter
the waters for your ablutions,
my heart was overpowered
with passion.

20 I am still a virgin.
O defectless Kaurava,
The bodiless god of love maddens me –
give yourself to me today."

21 Arjuna replied, "It so happens,
sweet girl, that Dharmarājā-Yudhiṣṭhira
has enjoined me to brahmacarya-celibacy
for twelve years. I cannot.

22 Girl of the river waters!
It would please me to please you.
And I can assure you I never speak anything
without meaning it.

23 Therefore, girl of the snake-race,
teil me how I should act
so that I can please you
and yet not go against dharma."

24 “Pāṇḍu’s son,” replied Ulūpī,
“I know why you are roaming
all over the land and why you accept
your brother’s command of brahmacarya.

25 Draupadī is your common wife,
and all of you agreed to this –
he who enters the room
when she was with another,

26 Would accept brahmacarya for twelve years.
Your exile, the exile of any of you,
and your brahmacarya is only
in relation to Draupadī.

27 And you have kept the vow,
You have well served dharma.
O large-eyed hero, your duty
is also to solace others’ suffering.

28 And I am suffering!
If you help me, your dharma
will not suffer. O Arjuna,
even if it should suffer a little,

29 Much greater will be your merit
for saving me.
O Arjuna, I am your bhaktā.
My lord, take me!
This has the approval of all
who are good.

30 If you do not take my love,
I will kill myself.
O mahā-muscled hero, earn merit
of the finest dharma by saving my life.

31 I beg you to help me,
O son of Kuntī!
Saviour of the helpless and distressed,
help me . . .

32 Brimming with love for you,
I ask you . . . Gratify my love . . .
Do as I say . . .
Give yourself to me."

33 Keeping dharma in mind,
Kuntī's son Arjuna
did all in his power to satisfy
the daughter of the lord of the Nāgas.

34 Noble Arjuna spent the night
in the palace of the Nāga,
and rose early next morning.
From the palace of Kaurava

35 He came with Ulūpī
to where the Gaṅgā
begins flowing into the plains.
Ulūpī then returned to her palace.

36 From her he received
a special boon – she said:
You will be lord of water-creatures,
able to vanquish any at will.

37 To Ulūpī was born,
by her union with Arjuna,
a mahā-fortune-favoured mahā-powerful son,
a handsome son named Irāvat.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Thunderbolt-wielding-Indra's son Arjuna
narrated all that happened to the Brahmins,
and went to the Himālayas.

2 He performed ritual ablutions
when he came to Agastyavaṭa,
Vasiṣṭha's hill,
and the peak of Bhṛgu.

3 Arjuna, best of the Kauravas,
gifted away thousands of cattle
and aśrama-dwellings
to many needy Brahmins.

4 Finest-of-Pāṇḍavas Arjuna bathed
at Hiraṇyabindu, the "Golden Drop",
after which he visited
many other places of pilgrimage.

5 Then he and the Brahmins
came down from the mountains
and, travelling eastwards,
visited the places of pilgrimage

6 There – so many of them –
the lovely river Utpalinī
in the forest of Naimiṣa,
and three other rivers;

7 Gayā, Gaṅgā, Kauśikī and Mahānadī;
Nandā and Aparanandā,
and a host of other
famous sacred spots

8 At whose āśramas
he performed purificatory baths,
and again gifted countless cows
to Brahmins.

9 He visited all the places
of pilgrimage
in the kingdoms of Aṅga,
Baṅga and Kaliṅga.

10 More ablutions and more wealth-donations.
When he reached
the borders of Kaliṅga, the Brahmins
with his permission left him.

11 Brave Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, alone now
save for a few attendants,
proceeded ahead till he came
to the shores of the ocean.

12 He crossed the kingdom of the Kaliṅgas,
feasting his eyes
on many cities, mansions and sacred places –
and moved on.

13 Skirting along the ocean,
he came to the hill of Mahendra-Indra,
crowded with ascetics,
and went to Maṇipūra.

14 There too he visited
all the sacred places of pilgrimage;
after which,
the mahā-muscled hero.

15 Entered the capital
of the rājā of Maṇipūra,
Citravāhana, whose daughter
was lovely Citrāṅgadā.

16 Wandering in the city
one day he chanced to see
Caitravāhinī-Citrāṅgadā, lovely-thighed beauty.
Desire filled him.

17 He went to the rājā
and said, revealing his desire,
"Give your daughter, O rājā,
to this mahā-ātmaned Kṣatriya."

18 The rājā asked, "Whose son are you,
and what is your name?"
"I am Dhanañjaya,
a Pāṇḍava, Kuntī's son."

19 The king said gently:
"There was a king
in our dynasty by the name
of Prabhañjana.

20 Because he was son-less,
he practised severe tapasyā
to get a son. Pināka-wielding Śiva,
god of gods,

21 The consort of Umā, was pleased,
and the god of gods granted him a boon –
'Only one son at a time
will be born in your dynasty.'

22 From then on we have had
only a single descendant
as successor. All my ancestors
had just one son each.

23 But I have only this girl
to succeed me. O bull-brave Bharata,
though she is a daughter,
I look on her as a son.

24 Therefore, I have made her my *putrikā*.
The son born to her
will succeed to my kingdom.
If, O Pāṇḍava,

25 You are agreeable to this condition,
I am willing
to offer my daughter.
Her son will be my successor."

26 Kuntī's son Arjuna agreed,
and accepted the girl.
He stayed in the city for three years
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

27 A son was born to the lovely-limbed girl.
Arjuna embraced her lovingly,
bid farewell to the king,
and continued on his travels.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 Bull-brave Bharata Arjuna
visited all the sacred places,
graced with holy men,
on the shores of the southern sea.

2 There were five *tīrthas* here,
once full of holy men,
whose sacred waters were now
shunned by all pilgrims –

3 Agastya, Saubhadra,
excellently holy Pauloma,
Kārandhama (which bestowed fruits
equalling an aśvamedha's),

4 And Bhāradvāja,
washer away of all demerits.
There five places of pilgrimage
were also visited by Arjuna.

5 Arjuna, Pāṇḍu's son,
descendant of Kuru,
found them uninhabited,
and enquired of dharma-knowing ascetics

6 Who lived at some distance,
"Why are these *tīrthas*
avoided by Brahma-knowing pilgrims?"
He said this, folding his palms in āñjali.

7 "Noble Kuru-scion," they said,
"five huge crocodiles
live in these waters, and devour
all tapasyā-rich pilgrims who step in them."

8 Mahā-muscled Arjuna listened;
then, in spite of their entreaties,
he hurried back
to the five *tīrthas*.

9 He came to sacred Saubhadra,
named after mahā-ṛṣi Subhadra,
and the foe-smiting hero stepped into its waters
for a purificatory bath.

10 Instantly, a huge crocodile
slipped in from below
and snapped at the leg
of Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

11 But Kuntī's son,
mahā-muscled excellent hero,
seized the water-beast
and dragged it up on the bank.

12 And immediately the beast
turned into a bewitchingy
beautiful girl glittering
with numerous ornaments.

13 O rājā, she shone
as divine light alone shines.
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna gazed
on her wondrous self-shining beauty,

14 And exclaimed ecstatically,
"Gracious girl, who are you?
Lady of the lake,
where do you live?
What mahā-crime did you commit
to be changed to a beast?"

15 "My name is Vargā," she said.
"I am an apsarā, O mahā-muscled hero.
I lived in the heavenly gardens,
dear to Kubera.

16 I had four loved-and-loving *sakhīs,*
all lovely. and able to travel at will.
One day, they and I planned a visit
to the dwelling of world-protecting Kubera.

17 On the way we noticed
a rigid-vowed Brahmin –
breathtakingly handsome – sitting by himself,
poring on the Vedas.

18 The forest seemed to blaze
with the light of his tapasyā.
He looked like the sun,
scattering a wealth of radiance.

19 And it suddenly struck us
that we should tempt him
out of his wonderful,
incomparable tapasyā!

20 So, great Bharata,
I, Saurabheyī, Samīcī,
Budbudā and Latā, all of us
together approached the Brahmin.

21 We sang. We joked.
We tried every kind of trick –
but he would not even once
look at us!

22 So deeply engrossed was he
in his sacred meditation,
that we did not
so much as exist for him!

23 O bull-brave Kṣatriya, angry
when he did look, furiously
he cursed us – 'Be crocodiles
for one hundred years!'

SECTION TWO HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 "We were terrified, (continued Vargā)
O noble Bharata-descendant.
We begged the rich-in-tapasya ṛṣi
to forgive us:

2 'O twice-born one, we lost our heads.
Beauty and youth and love
maddened us. We did wrong.
Forgive us.

3 To have even thought
of tempting so great an ascetic as you
was a crime
worse than death.

4 Don't those who know dharma say
that women should never be killed?
O spare us.
We are defenceless.

5 You are learned in dharma!
Shouldn't a Brahmin always
be gentle to all? Noble one,
show that that is true!

6 A good man protects those
who seek his protection.
We seek yours.
Forgive us this once.'

7 When he heard these words, the good-deed-doing
dharmātmā Brahmin,
effulgent like the moon or the sun,
softened (said Vaiśampāyana).

8 He said, 'Well, *a hundred years*
and *a hundred thousand* are phrases
used loosely to mean eternity.
Take mine literally.

9 You will become crocodiles,
and prey on pilgrims.
But a great hero will one day
drag you out on dry land.

10 When that happens,
you will revert to your real forms.
I do not speak what I do not mean,
not even when joking.

11 When that happens, these *tīrthas*
will be known the world over
as *nārī-tīrthas,*"female-pilgrimages".
And those who are wise
will accept them as sacred
and purifying places.'"

12 Vargā continued,
"Doing *pradakṣiṇa* before the Brahmin,
we left in great distress,
thinking all the time,

13 *When will we meet that man*
who will restore us
to our real forms?
O may it be soon!

14 And even as we were thinking this,
the divine ṛṣi Nārada
happened to come by,
and, seeing him,

15 Radiating heavenly glory, O Pārtha-Arjuna,
we were filled with joy.
We reverently greeted him;
heads bowed, and a little ashamed.

16 He asked us why we were distressed,
and we told him.
He listened carefully,
and said:

17 'In the flat lands on the coast
of the southern sea
are five charming *tīrthas*.
Go there immediately.

18 The tiger-among-men, pure-atmaned
Paṇḍava Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
will come and release you
from your dreadful curse.'

19 That is why, O defectless one,
we happen to be here.
O brave one, you have today
freed me of my curse!

20 But my friends are still trapped
in the waters
of the other lakes. O brave one,
save them too."

21 Arjuna, finest of the Pāṇḍavas
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
gladly stepped forward
and delivered all of them.

22 They rose from the waters
in their real forms,
looking in every way as lovely
as lovely apsarās do.

23 Arjuna made the *tīrthas*
safe for pilgrimage,
bade the apsarās farewell,
and returned to Citrāngadā.

24 He saw his son by her,
named Babhruvāhana,
on the throne. Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
said to rājā Citravāhana:

25 "Accept my son Babhruvābhana
as your son,
and release me of my debt
to you."

26 To Citrāṅgada Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna said:
"Gracious lady,
stay here, and look after
our son Babhruvāhana.

27 A time will come when you will live with me
happily in Indraprastha.
When you come,
my mother Kuntī, Yudhiṣṭhira,

28 My other brothers
and friends and relatives will greet you.
And you will be happy
meeting all of them.

29 Yudhiṣṭhira, firm in dharma,
will conquer the whole world,
and perform a massive
rājasūya sacrifice.

30 All the famous kings of the world
will then be present.
Your father too will come
with vast presents of jewels.

31 That will be the best time for you to come.
I will meet you at the rājasūya.
Till then, look after our son,
and do not cry.

32 Where Babhruvāhana is, I am;
so look after him well.
He is a jewel of this dynasty –
he will bring it lustre.

33 According to dharma,
he is Citravāhana's son;
but his flesh and blood is Paurava.
Look after this beloved Pāṇḍava.

34 My dear, blameless beloved,
do not lament my absence."
With these words, Arjuna left Citrangadā,
and went to Gokarṇa,

35 The spot sacred to Paśupati-Śiva,
the spot whose very darshan
gives liberation. Even a criminal
may without fear set foot there.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY

1 Infinitely valiant Arjuna continued his travels,
visiting one after another
the *tīrthas* on the shores
of the western ocean.

2 And he finally came
to the holy spot Prabhāsa,
where he did his ablutions
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

3 News reached Madhusūdana-Krishna
that dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
had arrived
at sacred and lovely Prabhāsa.

4 And Mādhava-Krishna hurried to the spot to meet
his loved-and-loving *sakhā* Kaunteya-Arjuna.
They embraced,
and asked about each other's health.

5 Like the two intimate *sakhās*
of the ancient past,
the ṛṣis Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
both sat down.

6 Vāsudeva-Krishna asked Arjuna,
"Son of Pāṇḍu,
what is this I hear of your travels
to all the *tīrthas*?"

7 Arjuna explained in detail
all that had happened.
The lord of the Vṛṣṇis said,
"Just as it should be."

8 Krishna and Pāṇḍava Arjuna
enjoyed their stay in Prabhāsa,
after which they went
to the hill of Raivataka.

9 Prior to their arrival there,
the hill, on Krishna's orders,
was lavishly decorated.
Food was cooked.

10 They enjoyed all the exquisite pleasures,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna
sat down to witness
a dance and a play.

11 Thanking and dismissing
the actors and dancers, mahā-minded Arjuna
stretched himself
on a glittering, luxurious bed.

12 And as he relaxed, the mahā-muscled hero
described to Sātvata-Krishna
the sacred lakes, rivers, mountains
and forests he had visited.

13 Even as he was speaking,
O Janamejaya,
lying on that heaven-soft bed,
sleep stole on Kaunteya-Arjuna.

14 Early in the morning
he woke to sweet songs
and the melody of the vīṇā,
and praises from poets and bards.

15 After the morning rites,
he was again met by Varṣṇeya-Krishna,
most affectionately. They rode
in a golden chariot to Dvārākā.

16 Dvārakā was gaily festooned,
streets, gardens, and houses all adorned
to give a welcoming pūjā
to Kuntī's son.

17 And the citizens of Dvārakā flocked
to the main street
in hundreds and thousands
to catch a glimpse of Kaunteya-Arjuna.

18 Hundreds of thousands
of Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas, and Bhojas
crowded the public roads,
to welcome the Pāṇḍava.

19 Tremendous was the welcome
when he arrived.
He acknowledged their greetings,
and received their blessings.

20 All the young men of the Yādava race
received heroic Arjuna warmly.
Repeatedly he rose and embraced
those of his own age.

21 In the magnificent mansion of Krishna,
studded with gems
and filled with all pleasures,
he and Krishna passed many happy nights.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 Some time after this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
a great festival was held
by the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
on Raivataka hill.

2 In that festival
of the Bhojas, Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
Arjuna gifted lavish wealth
to thousands of Brahmins.

3 O rājā Janamejaya! The slopes of the hill
glittered with gem-studded mansions,
looking like so many
wish-fulfilling trees.

4 Skilled musicians played.
Expert dancers danced.
Excellent singers sang.

5 And the mahā-radiant Vṛṣṇi youths,
wearing rich ornaments
and driving golden chariots,
looked handsomer than ever.

6 Hundreds and thousands
of citizens and their wives came,
some on foot,
some in splendid chariots.

7 Plough-wielding Haladhara-Balārama
was also there, a little intoxicated,
with his wife Revatī
and a host of gandharvas.

8 Ugrasena, illustrious rājā of the Vṛṣṇis,
was there, with his thousand wives,
and a large following
of gandharvas.

9 Difficult-to-defeat-in-battle Pradyumna,
was there, and Sāmba; drunk,
in expensive dresses, wearing divine garlands,
they danced like two gods.

10 Akrūra, Sāraṇa, Gada,
Babhru, Viduratha,
Niśaṭha, Cārudeṣṇa,
Pṛthu and Vipṛthu;

11 Satyaka, Sātyaki,
Bhaṅgakāra, Mahārava,
Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman,
Uddhava, and many others

12 Came there, accompanied
by their wives and hosts of gandharvas,
All brought lustre
to the Raivataka festival.

13 During the varied mahā-wonderful celebrations
of that great festival,
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna
roamed about together.

14 One day they came across
the lovely daughter of Vasudeva,
Subhadrā, resplendent with jewels,
roaming with her *sakhī*-friends.

15 Arjuna saw her,
and fell in love with her.
Krishna noticed Pārtha-Arjuna looking at her
with rapt attention.

16 Smiling gently, tiger-among-men Krishna
said: "What's this, Arjuna?
A wanderer in the forests –
smitten with kāma?

17 She is Subhadrā,
my sister and Sāraṇa's sister,
the pride of my father.
If your heart is set on her,
shall I speak
to my father?"

18 "Daughter of Vasudeva
and sister of Vāsudeva-Krishna!"
exclaimed Arjuna. "Who can fail
to be fascinated by her beauty?

19 If this lady of the Vṛṣṇis,
your sister, marries me,
everything auspicious and prosperous
will light up my life.

20 Tell me, O Janārdana-Krishna,
how I can win her.
I will do all I can
to have her as mine."

21 Krishna replied, "O bull-brave hero!
The usual course for Ksatriyas is a svayaṁvara.
But that won't do, Pārtha-Arjuna.
Who knows how girls choose?

22 Those who know dharma say
abduction is recommended
for a Kṣatriya hero
who has marriage in mind.

23 Who knows how my sweet sister
will choose in a svayaṁvara?
The best advice I can give is –
Run off with her."

24 Krishna and Arjuna agreed
on the best course of action.
Messengers were sent to Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira
and he was asked

25 If he approved of the plan.
Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira
approved of the plan
the instant he heard it.

26 Bhīma was delighted
when he heard of all this,
and proudly discussed with others
all that he had heard.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna received news
of Yudhiṣṭhira's approval.
He also learnt that the girl
had gone to Raivataka hill.

2 So, in consultation with Vāsudeva-Krishna,
bull-brave Bharata Arjuna
settled on the best plan
of action.

3 Clad in armour, armed with a sword
and leather finger-guards,
Arjuna climbed into Krishna's golden chariot,
pulled by Sugrīva and Śaibya,

4 Pretending to go on a hunt.
The chariot was covered
with small bells and bristled with weapons;
its wheels

5 Resounded like roaring clouds;
it shone like a flame;
it struck terror in the hearts
of all enemies.

6 Subhadrā paid holy tribute
to the Raivataka hill
and the gods, after which
she was blessed by the Brahmins;

7 She half-circled the hill in *pradakṣiṇa* and turned
to Dvārakā, when, smitten by Kāma's arrows,
Kuntī's son rushed towards her
and pulled lovely-limbed Subhadrā

8 Into his chariot. Hurriedly
the tiger-among-men seized
the sweet-smiling lady,
and sped towards his city.

9 Subhadrā's armed guards saw her
dragged away, and rushed
in a body, shouting,
to Dvārakā.

10 They ran into the Yādava court
called Sudharmā,
and narrated before the Chief of the Sabhā
the prowess of Pārtha-Arjuna.

11 The Chief of the Sabhā blew loudly
on his gold-leafed trumpet,
summoning the city warriors
to arms.

12 Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis, and Andhakas,
alarmed, flocked in,
hastily abandoning eating and drinking
to do so.

13 They looked like burning faggots
adding to a central splendour of fire –
those mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Vṛṣṇi

14 And Andhaka races; those tigers-among-men
sat down on golden thrones,
covered with exquisite
gem- and coral-studded cloth-spreads.

15 They looked like an assembly of gods;
and the Chief of the Sabhā
and his assistants placed before them
the story of Jiṣṇu-Arjuna's conduct.

16 They heard, the proud Vṛṣṇi heroes,
their eyes flushed red with wine,
and they rose,
unable to stand the insult.

17 "Yoke our chariots!" shouted some.
"Get our weapons!"
"Bring our mahā-armour and bows!"
A great tumult arose,

18 With a host of warriors
shouting for their charioteers
and ordering them
to yoke their golden chariots,

19 And as they waited
for their chariots to arrive,
they created a deafening uproar
in the assembly.

20 Proud, wine-flushed Vanamāli-Balarāma,
tall as Kailāsa hill,
dressed in blue and wearing
wildflower garlands, spoke up:

21 "Fools! What are all of you shouting for?
Janārdana-Krishna is silent.
Without knowing his will,
why whine senselessly?

22 Let us first find out
what mahā-minded Krishna has in mind.
And whatever he suggests,
let us put into action immediately."

23 Silently they listened to Halāyudha-Balarāma
and his words worth listening to,
and murmured, "*Sādhu*! *Sādhu!*
Excellent! Excellent!"

24 Silence prevailed again in the court
because of Baladeva-Balarāma's
intelligent advice,
and they all resumed their seats.

25 Then Balarāma, turning to Krishna, said,
"Janārdana-Krishna, you see all this.
Why haven't you spoken at all?
Why are you silent?

26 It was for your sake, Acyuta-Krishna,
that we welcomed and honoured Arjuna.
It seems that scoundrel is a blot on his family.
He doesn't deserve our respect and welcome.

27 Is there any man from a good family
who will smash the plate
after eating the food
he has been served?

28 Granted that he desired such an alliance –
but what kind of a man
is he who humiliates
his host?

29 He has insulted us and flouted you,
O Keśava-Krishna, by abducting Subhadrā.
Is he bent on suicide,
or what?

30 He has lifted his foot and placed it
on my head.
A trodden snake always hisses back.
O Govinda-Krishna, it's intolerable!

31 Watch me! Today, all by myself,
I will rid the earth of all Kauravas.
Never, never will I swallow
Arjuna's insult!"

32 All the Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
loudly acclaimed his words,
and their roars sounded
like *dundubhi*-drums or clouds.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 With all the powerful Vṛṣṇis
shouting in one voice
(continued Vaiśampāyana), Krishna
spoke these words of dharma and artha:

2 "Guḍākeśa-Arjuna has done nothing
to insult our race.
On the contrary, his action
has added to our honour.

3 Pārtha-Arjuna knows
we are not greedy for money.
He also knows that the outcome
of a svayaṁvara is unpredictable.

4 And what kind of a man
would accept a bride as a gift,
as if she were an animal?
And what kind of a father is he
who would sell
his daughter to a husband?

5 Kaunteya-Arjuna saw through the defects
in our marriage customs,
and preferred to abduct my sister,
as decreed by dharma.

6 This union is perfectly proper.
Subhadrā is illustrious, so is he.
He surely had this in mind
when he abducted her.

7 Who here would not like
to have Arjuna for relative?
Arjuna is a Bharata, of Śāntanu's race,
Kuntibhoja's daughter's son.

8 I can think of no one
in the three worlds – not one –
who can defeat him in battle,
save Śiva –

9 Not even Indra and the Rudras,
His chariot is spendid.
My own horses are yoked to it.
His skill as a warrior

10 Is unparalleled,
his dexterity of hand well-known.
Who is like him? Go to him.
Plead with him. Bring him back.

11 If Arjuna goes back to Indraprastha,
defeating us as he has done,
what will people think of us? –
No harm in compromising."

12 These words of Vāsudeva-Krishna
were enough to convince them.
They brought Arjuna back,
and he formally married Subhdrā.

13 Revered by the Vṛṣṇis,
he stayed in Dvārakā
for a year, passing his time
pleasurably.

14 The last part of his exile
was spent in Puṣkara.
His twelve years over,
he returned to Khāṇḍavaprastha.

15 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna touched the feet
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma.
Nakula and Sahadeva praṇāma-ed him;
Arjuna embraced both.
Then, after revering the Brahmins,
he went to Draupadī.

16 Draupadī coquettishly said
to the great Kuru scion Arjuna:
"Kuntī's son, why here?
Go to the daughter of the Sātvatas!

17 A second knot always weakens the first,
doesn't it?"
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī kept bantering
in this strain, while Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

18 Protested, explained, and pleaded forgiveness
again and again.
After which, he went to Subhadrā
who was dressed in red silk,

19 And sent her into the inner apartments,
wearing a milkmaid's dress.
She looked even more beautiful
even in that attire.

20 Lovely-thighed lady, wife of a hero,
best-of-women, large-eyed,
pink-eyed Subhadrā entered
and praṇāma-ed Pṛthā-Kuntī.

21 Moved, Kuntī bent and smelt the head
of the lovely-limbed lady,
and blessed her
with countless good wishes.

22 Bhadrā-Subhadrā, lovely lady
with a face like a full moon,
went to Draupadī, touched her feet,
and said, "I am your slave maid."

23 Draupadī quickly rose,
embraced the sister of Mādhava-Krishna,
and said happily,
"May your husband have no rival."

24 Subhadrā, pleased, replied,
"May it be so."
From that day, the Pāṇḍavas
(continued Janamejaya)

25 And the other mahā-chariot-heroes
lived happily
in Indraprastha,
and Kuntī was happy.

26 When he learnt that Arjuna,
best among the Pāṇḍavas,
had reached the excellent city
of Indraprastha,

27 Lotus-eyed and pure-ātmaned
Keśava-Krishna hurried there
with his brother,
brave Balarāma, and

28 Other heroes and mahā-chariot-warriors
of the Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka races;
and his sons, cousins,
and many others.

29 The commander-in-chief of the Vṛṣṇis,
foe-vanquishing,
illustrious, large-hearted,
and intelligent Akrūra came too,

30 Along with the mahā-illustrious Uddhava,
known for his shining qualities,
who was the disciple
of great Bṛhaspati himself.

31 Others who came included
Satyaka, Sātyaki, Kṛtavarman,
Pradyumna, Sāmba,
Niśaṭha, Śaṅku;

32 Powerful Cārudeṣṇa, Jhillī,
Vipṛthu, and mahā-muscled Sāraṇa,
and most learned of learned men,
Gada himself;

33 Together with a host
of other Vṛṣṇis, Bhojas,
and Andhakas, who brought wedding gifts
to Khaṇḍavaprastha.

34 When he heard that Mādhava-Krishna
had come, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
sent his twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva
to receive him.

35 Warmly welcomed, the heroes
of the race
entered flag-and-pennant-decorated
Khaṇḍavaprastha.

36 Clean, water-sprinkled streets;
clusters of flowers
and fragrant garlands,
scented with cool sandalwood paste;

37 All parts of the city filled
with burning aloe scent;
happy and healthy citizens,
traders and merchants.

38 Mahā-muscled Puruṣottama-Keśava-Krishna,
Balarāma and the other heroes
of the Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas and Bhojas
entered the city,

39 And were reverently greeted
by thousands of citizens and Brahmins.
They went straight
to the Puraṁdara-Indra-proud palace,

40 Where Yudhiṣṭhira received Balarāma
with customary respect,
and clasped Keśava-Krishna with both arms,
and smelt his head.

41 Govinda-Krishna, pleased, reciprocated
Yudhiṣṭhira's greetings
in all sincerity, and did likewise
with tiger-among-men Bhīma.

42 After this, Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
ceremonially welcomed
all the chiefs
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas.

43 Some he respected as superiors,
others as equals;
some he received with reverence,
others with familiarity.

44 Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna presented enormous gifts
to the bridegroom's family,
and to shining Subhadrā
he gave presents from her relatives.

45 One thousand golden chariots,
tinkling with kiṅkiṇī-bells,
each pulled by four horses,
complete with skilled charioteers;

46 Ten thousand splendid, smooth-fleshed,
full-milked cows
from the land of Mathurā – were presented
by Krishna to the Pāṇḍavas

47 Janārdana-Krishna was so pleased
that he gifted one thousand
moon-white horses
complete with golden harnesses,

48 And one thousand white mules
with great black manes,
all excellently-trained
and swifter than the wind.

49 Each wearing a hundred golden jewels
round her neck,
each skilled in the arts of massaging
and serving wine –

50 He gave one thousand shining-skinned,
young, pre-menstrual girls like these –
pink-complexioned,
dressed in lovely robes.

51 He gave, as part of the bride's dowry,
one hundred thousand horses
from the land of Bāhlika,
specially trained for riding.

52 He gave Subhadrā ten chests
of excellent gold of the Dāśārha clan,
glowing like fire; some of them refined
and some pure.

53 Rutting juices running down their temples,
ears, and anuses,
spendidly-caparisoned,
hill-huge, invincible in battle –

54 A thousand such elephants,
with bells ringing,
adorned with gold paraphernalia,
each with its own howdah,

55 Were presented to Pārtha-Arjuna
by Haladhara-Balarāma,
the plough-wielding hero, as his personal
wedding gift.

56 A mahā-ocean of gifts! –
waves of dresses and blankets;
mahā-elephants the ocean-animals;
flags the floating weeds.

57 The Yādava ocean of gifts – mingled
with the Pāṇḍava ocean of wealth –
the whole brimmed over,
to the dismay of their foes.

58 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
accepted all these gifts
and paid his respects to the Vṛṣṇi
and Andhaka mahā-chariot-heroes.

59 And all the splendid Kuru, Vṛṣṇi
and Andhaka warriors passed their time
in great festivity,
like good men enjoying heaven.

60 Spending their days in joy,
the Kauravas and Vṛṣṇis
indulged freely,
noisily merrymaking and feasting.

61 After many days spent in this festive fashion,
entertained and honoured by the Kurus,
the Vṛṣṇis returned
to Dvāravatī-Dvārakā.

62 Led by Balarāma, the Vṛṣṇi
and Andhaka mahā-chariot-heroes,
taking expensive gems as gifts
from the Kauravas, went home.

63 Mahā-ātmaned Vāsudeva-Krishna, however
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
stayed behind with Pārtha-Arjuna
in the lovely city of Indraprastha.

64 Mahā-illustrious Krishna scoured the banks
of the Yamunā hunting deer.
He and diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna
hunted deer and boar with sharp arrows.

65 Subhadrā, Keśava-Krishna's dear sister,
gave birth to a son, Saubhadra,
like Puloman's daughter Śacī
to Indra's son Jayanta.

66 A long-armed, broad-chested son,
with eyes like a bull's;
that foe-smiting boy, Subhadrā's child,
was named Abhimanyu,

67 Or "the Unafraid, Confident One",
because the son of Arjuna,
the bull-brave Bharata, was fearless
and quick to strike.

68 As fire is produced from *śamī*-wood
by rubbing it in a yajña,
Abhimanyu was fathered by Dhanañjaya Arjuna
on the Sātvata girl Subhadrā.

69 When the child was born,
Kunti's son mahā-illustrious Yudhiṣṭhira
donated one thousand cattle
and thousands of gold coins to Brahmins.

70 The boy was a favourite of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and of his father and uncles.
He shone like the moon
and won the hearts of the citizens.

71 Krishna performed the birth rituals;
and the boy grew in strength,
waxing like the moon
in the bright fortnight.

72 From Arjuna the foe-smiting boy learnt
the art of weapons-wielding,
in all its four branches and ten aspects,
divine and human. He studied the Vedas.

73 Mahā-powerful Abhimanyu proved a worthy foil
to his father in agility,
repulsing of weapons, advancing
and retreating, circling strategically,

74 And covering. When Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
saw Saubhadra-Abhimanyu
so expert in the use of arms,
his joy was boundless.

75 Abhimanyu could annihilate his foes.
He had all the auspicious marks
on his body. Bull-shoulders,
back-tilting snake-head,

76 The pride of a lion,
the wrath of an elephant,
a voice like a *dundubhi*-drum,
a face like the full moon.

77 In stamina, handsomeness, and sharp features
he equalled Krishna. Dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna thought his son
to be Maghavān-Indra himself.

78 Draupadī, auspicious Pāñcāla princess,
had five heroic,
noble, mountain-strong sons
by the five Pāṇḍavas.

79 By Yudhiṣṭhira, Prativindhya;
by Vṛkodara-Bhīma, Sutasoma;
Śrutakarman by Arjuna;
Śatānīka by Nakula,

80 And Śrutasena by Sahadeva –
all mahā-chariot-heroes.
These five were born to Pāñcālī-Draupadī
as the Ādityas to Aditi.

81 Śāstra-knowing Brahmins said to Yudhiṣṭhira
that his son in blocking enemies
would be like the Vindhya mountains –
so he was named Prativindhya.

82 Bhīma's sun-and-moon-radiant son was Sutasoma
because he was born
after Bhīma had performed
one thousand *soma* sacrifices.

83 And Śrutakarman or "the Hero of Renowned Deeds"
was so named because he was born
after diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna
returned from his heroic exploits.

84 Nakula's son Śatānīka was named
after a mahā-ātmaned royal ṛṣi
who belonged to the illustrious race
of the Kurus.

85 Because Sahadeva's son was born
under the constellation of Kṛttika
(or Vāhnidaivata)
he was named after the general
of the gods, Kārtikeya,
or Śrutasena, the excellent leader.

86 They were all born
at intervals of one year.
All of them achieved high renown,
and were close to each other.

87 All the rituals of infancy and childhood,
as enjoined in the śāstras,
such as *cūḍopanayana,* were performed
by the family purohita Dhaumya.

88 The strict-vowed boys studied the Vedas carefully,
and were instructed by Arjuna
in all that pertained to the use
of human and superhuman weapons.

89 O tiger-among-rājās! With such god-like sons born
to them, all of them broad-chested,
all great warriors,
the Pāṇḍavas rejoiced.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

1 The Pāṇḍavas continued to dwell
in Indraprastha, as advised
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
and annexed many kingdoms.

2 Just as the in-dwelling ātman finds
happiness living in a body
of good deeds and auspicious marks,
the citizens found joy
living in the beneficent reign
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

3 Yudhiṣṭhira conscientiously pursued
the goals of Dharma,
Kāma and Artha, as if each was
as dear to him as his ātman.

4 And it appeared as if the three goals of life,
Dharma, Artha, and Kāma,
were living beings –
and Yudhiṣṭhira the fourth goal.

5 With Yudhiṣṭhira as their ruler,
they had a king devoted
to the Vedas, a performer of yajñas,
and encourager of good deeds.

6 Even the fickle goddess of wealth Lakṣmī
became stable,
high ideals prevailed,
and Dharma spread all over the world

7 Surrounded by his four brothers,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira glowed with the glory
that accompanies a mahā-yajña
celebrated with the four Vedas.

8 And many learned Brahmins,
each as great as Bṛhaspati,
led by Dhaumya, attended him,
as the gods attend Prajāpati Brahmā.

9 Such was the profuse affection
of the people that their eyes
shone with joy each time they looked on him,
spotless like the full moon.

10 They delighted in him not merely
because he was their king,
but because he loved them.
And he took pains to please them.

11 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sweet-speaking son,
learned Yudhiṣṭhira, was never known
to utter a word improper, untrue,
intolerant or offensive.

12 The mahā-benevolent ruler of the Bharata race
passed his days happily
seeking the welfare of everyone
as he would his own.

13 The Pāṇḍavas subjugated many rulers
by their prowess,
and passed their days in peace,
with no foes to disturb them.

14 One day Bībhatsu-Arjuna said to Krishna,
"It is now summertime.
Let us go, Krishna,
to the banks of the Yamunā.

15 Janārdana-Krishna, slayer of Madhu,
if you like, let us go there
with our friends, relax ourselves,
and return in the evening."

16 "Exactly what I was thinking,
Pārtha-Arjuna", replied Krishna.
"Let us go and splash a little
in the waters of the Yamunā."

17 They obtained Dharmarājā-Yudhiṣṭhira's
permission, and, accompanied
by many friends, Pārtha-Arjuna
and Govinda-Krishna went to the river,

18 And chose an entrancing spot.
ideal for relaxation,
with tall trees, and great mansions resembling
those in Puraṁdara-Indra's heaven.

19 These mansions were chockfull
of savoury, expensive food and drinks
prepared specially
for Pāṛtha-Arjuna and Vārṣṇeya-Krishna;

20 They sported flowers and perfumes,
and the inner apartments were gem-studded.
Krishna and Arjuna entered and gave themselves up
to enjoyment.

21 Full-hipped and large-breasted girls
with ravishing eyes
began amusing themselves, teetering
under the influence of wine.

22 Some strayed in the woods,
some splashed in the river,
and some preferred the houses,
as directed by Pārtha-Arjuna and Krishna.

23 O mahārāja Janamejaya! Draupadī and Subhadrā,
wine-flushed, began distributing
expensive ornaments and dresses
to the merrymaking women.

24 Some danced
Some sang
Some laughed
Some joked
Some drank

25 Some quarrelled
Some fought
Some gossiped
Some mocked

26 And the woods were filled
with the sweet sounds of flutes,
vīṇās and mṛdaṅgams, and seemed
to be Pleasure personified.

27 Even as all this went on,
Dāśārha-Krishna and Kaurava-Arjuna
quietly slipped away
to a seductive spot nearby.

28 There they sat down
on costly seats, two mahā-ātmaned Krishnas,
two conquerors
of hostile cities,

29 And Pārtha-Arjuna and Mādhava-Krishna
amused themselves by recalling
their past exploits, and chatting
on heroic feats, and so on.

30 While Vāsudeva-Krishna and Dhañanjaya-Arjuna
were spending their time
in this leisurely fashion,
like the twin Aśvins in heaven,
it so happened that
a Brahmin came that way.

31 He looked like a massive śāla-tree;
his skin was burnt gold;
his body seemed to glow
blue-and-yellow;
his width was the same size
as his height.

32 His hair was matted;
he was in rags;
but he shone like the early sun,
his eyes were like lotus-leaves;
a reddish blaze radiated from him,
continuously.

33 Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Krishna saw
that radiance-rich Brahmin
coming towards them, and hastily
and respectfully stood up.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 The Brahmin said to Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna of the Sātvatas:
"You two! You live in Khāṇḍava,
and you are great men, I hear.

2 I am a hungry Brahmin. I eat – and eat!
Vārṣṇeya-Krishna, Pārtha-Arjuna,
give me something to eat,
for I am hungry."

3 Krishna and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna said to him,
"What would you like, O Brahmin?
Tell us,
and we will supply it."

4 When he heard this,
he turned and addressed
the two heroes who showed
such solicitude for him:

5 "Nothing of your usual stuff!
I am Pāvaka-Agni.
Know this,
and give me to eat.

6 They tell me this Khāṇḍava forest
is protected by Indra.
Because mahā-ātmaned Śakra-Indra protects it,
I cannot consume it.

7 Here live his friend Takṣaka
and Takṣaka's relatives and friends.
That is why they say
thunderbolt-wielding Indra protects it.

8 For Takṣaka's sake, he protects
many other creatures too.
Because of Śakra-Indra
I have not been able to consume it.

9 Whenever he sees my hunger blaze up,
he sends down quenching rain.
And no matter how hard I try,
I am unable to consume it.

10 Both of you are skilled arms-wielders –
with your help
I could consume the forest.
This is the food I want.

11 Block with your weapons the rain
when it falls on me,
and prevent any forest-creature
from escaping from the fire."

12 But why (asked Janamejaya)
did the god Agni
so wish to consume creature-filled
and Mahendra-Indra-protected Khāṇḍava?

13 It could not have been any
ordinary reason that made
Havyavāhana-Agni so eager to angrily devour
the Khāṇḍava-forest.

14 Tell me, O muni Vaiśampāyana, the reason why
Agni was so eager,
in the distant past,
to consume Khāṇḍava – and in detail.

15 Very well, O rājā (replied Vaiśampāyana),
let me tell you in full
the story of the burning
of the Khāṇḍava forest.

16 In the Pūrāṇas there is mention
of a rājā named Śvetika,
of great strength and fame,
almost equalling Harihaya-Indra's.

17 He surpassed all in yajñas,
charity, and clear-thinking.
He ordered innumerable yajñas,
and donated enormous *dakṣiṇās*.

18 It seemed that the only interest he had
was to perform
yajñas and related rituals,
and to give large sums in charity.

19 That percipient monarch performed
so many yajñas
that the officiating ṛtvik priests, tired,
and eyes smarting

20 With smoke from the holy fire,
deserted him, and resolved
never to serve him again.
The king pleaded with them to return,
but their eyes were so sore
that they refused.

21 So he obtained their permission
and went on with his yajñas
with the help of a new group
of *ṛtviks*.

22 Yajñas over, it occurred to the mahā-illustrious
rājā that he should conclude
with a super-yajña that would extend
over a hundred years.

23 But Śvetika could find no *ṛtviks*
to subscribe to his plan.
Again and again, the rājarṣi,
his friends and relatives

24 Respectfully submitted their request
to the priests,
flattering them with gentle speeches
and large and expensive gifts,

25 But they steadfastly refused
to have anything to do
with the yajña. Finally, angered,
he went to their āśrama,

26 And said: "Excellent Brahmins,
if I were of low birth,
if I failed to serve you,
you would have reason to refuse me.

27 But this is not so;
and I cannot understand
why you are adamant in frustrating me.
Is it proper, O Brahmins,

28 That you should pointlessly behave
in this way?
Listen to me again,
and give me your help. O Brahmins,

29 If you persist in being hostile,
I shall be forced to seek help from others,
whom I will persuade
with sweet words and deeds,

30 Explaining clearly what I want.
And I will see to it
that they agree." Having said this,
he paused.

31 The Brahmins had made up
their minds to refuse,
so they put on a pose of anger,
and retorted:

32 "The trouble, O lord of the earth,
is that you are always sacrificing!
We are fed up and tired
doing the same thing again and again.

33 The yajñas we have supervised
are more than enough!
It seems to us, O defectless king,
that your judgement has been affected.

34 Go to Rudra-Śiva. See if he helps
at your yajña."
Incensed by their words,
king Śvetika lost his temper.

35 He hurried to Kailāsa hill,
and began a long, strict
meditation and propitiation
of Mahādeva-Śiva.

36 He fasted for years;
he subsisted only
on fruits and roots of plants,
eating only

37 On the twelfth day, sometimes
on the sixteenth,
in order to propitiate Śiva.
He stood still as a tree-trunk

38 For six months,
with hands upraised and eyes unblinking
in fixed faith
(said Vaiśampāyana).

39 Śañkara-Śiva, pleased with rājā Śvetaka,
gave him darshan, saying,
"Great foe-smiter, tiger-among-men,
your tapasyā is successful.

40 What do you wish?
Name your boon."
When he heard radiant Rudra-Śiva
say this,

41 The mahā-ātmaned rajarṣi Śvetika
prostrated himself exclaiming,
"Shining one, supreme deity, god of gods,
help me in my yajña."

42 Pleased with the request,
Bhagavān Śiva replied:
"We gods do not give help
at yajñas;

43 But since your tapasyā has been
of such unswerving intensity,
I will offer my help –
but on one condition.

44 If for twelve years, O Indra-among-rājās,
you can pour ghee-libations
into the fire,
leading the life of a brahmacārī,

45 Then only will I come forward
to help at your yajña."
King Śvetika listened carefully
to Rudra-Śiva's instruction,

46 And did exactly
as the trident-wielding deity advised.
Twelve years later,
he went to Maheśvara-Śiva.

47 Lokabhāvana-Śaṅkara-Śiva looked at the rājā,
and, satisfied with his tapasyā,
said to Śvetika,
the finest of the world's monarchs:

48 "I am pleased with you
O finest of kings.
The duty of assisting at yajñas, O foe-smiter,
is assigned to Brahmins,

49 So I cannot myself go and help you.
On earth, however, is a Brahmin,
mahā-fortune-favoured,
who is like my own self.

50 His name is Durvāsas,
he has mahā-radiance.
He will help you.
Start making preparations."

51 The rājā listened to Rudra-Śiva,
returned to his capital, and began
organising the preliminaries
for the great yajña.

52 When all the ritual materials
had been collected,
he went again to Rudra-Śiva and said,
"The preliminaries are ready,

53 O Rudra-Śiva, through your grace.
Grant me your *dīkṣā*-permission
to start the yajña tomorrow."
Mahādeva-Śiva

54 Summoned Durvāsas
and said to him, "Ṛṣi,
best of Brahmins,
this is the mahā-ātmaned rājā Śvetika.

55 O finest of Brahmins,
it is my wish that you
should help at his yajña."
"It will be so,"

56 Replied Durvāsas,
and the ritual sacrifice was performed
as ordained in the tradition
with elaborate *dakṣiṇās*.

57 When the mahā-ātmaned rājā's yajña ended,
the various priests who had helped,
with Durvasas' permission,
left.

58 The maha-radiant *sadasyas* also left
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Mahā-fortune-favoured rājā Śvetika
entered his palace.

59 The shining god Agni,
having consumed too much ghee
at the yajña, became sick
and looked pale.

60 Noticing his energy waning,
Agni went to Brahmā,
the most adored of the gods,
respectfully approached him,

61 And said;
"Bhagavan! Revered one!
Rājā Śvetika has over-fed me
in his yajña.
I do not feel well.
My radiant strength is waning.

62 Return my powers to me,
I seek your grace."
The Creator of all the worlds,
Bhagavān Brahmā,

63 Smiling, said to Havyavāhana-Agni,
"For twelve years you have been sucking in large quantities of ghee-libations,
O fortune-favoured one!

64 It is no surprise that you
should be struck ill.
Agni, your splendour and strength
have declined,

65 But do not lose heart.
They will be restored.
I have a cure.
The hide-out of the enemies

66 Of the gods, Khāṇdava-forest,
which long ago you razed
to the ground at the gods' bidding,
has regained its luxuriance,

67 And again shelters many creatures.
Go there. Devour it.
Regain your strength.
This is the cure for your debility."

68 Agni, fortified by the words
of the Over-Deity, Parameṣṭhin-Brahmā,
sped angrily towards the forest
of Khāṇḍava,

69 And, as soon as he arrived there,
he burst into full flame,
fanned by the winds
in that forest.

70 The animals of the forest,
seeing it aflame,
rushed out in frantic efforts
to extinguish the blaze.

71 Hundreds of thousands of elephants
scooped water in their trunks
and showered it
on the furious flames.

72 Multi-headed snakes,
with fear and anger,
spat water on the flames
from their erect hoods.

73 And slowly, they and other creatures
succeeded in extinguishing,
in various ways,
the threatening fire.

74 Havyavāhana-Agni continued to blaze forth
in Khāṇḍava,
but each time the forest animals
joined forces and extinguished the fire.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 Oblation-bearer Havyavāhana, Agni,
frustrated and humbled
in a furious rage sought the help
of Brahmā Pitāmaha.

2 He mentioned to Bhagavān Brahmā.
all that had happened.
Brahma ponderd briefly,
then said:

3 "There is one way, O defectless one,
by which you can consume
the Khāṇḍava forest,
but you will have to wait.

4 The ancient gods Nara and Nārāyana
will help you.
Go to them,
they will fulfil the purposes of the gods.

5 They are incarnated as Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Arjuna on earth.
They are now in the forest
of Khāṇḍavaprastha.

6 Go to them; ask them to help you.
If they agree,
even Indra and the gods will be unable
to frustrate your desire.

7 They will be able to prevent
the creatures of Khāṇḍava from escaping.
They can stop even Devāraja-Indra.
I know this."

8 Immediately (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Havyavāhana-Agni hurried to where
Pārtha-Arjuna and Krishna were,
and repeated before them what

9 I have already reported
about Brahmā's advice.
When Arjuna and Krishna heard
Agni's request,

10 Agni desiring to consume the Khāṇḍava forest
even against Śatakrata-Indra's wishes,
Arjuna said
these appropriate words:

11 "I have all kinds of wonderful weapons
with which I can,
if necessary, fight and defeat
thunder-wielding Vajra-dhara-Indra.

12 But the fact is
I have no bow to utilise
all the strength I can put
into an archery battle.

13 Revered one bhagavan, my dexterous fingers
need lightweight arrows
to fill my quiver inexhaustibly.
The chariot I have
cannot withstand the weight
of all the arrows I need.

14 I need pure-white, wind- swift steeds,
and a chariot shining with sun-dazzle,
whose wheel-noise
is like clouds roaring.

15 Nor indeed does Krishna have a weapon
to suit his skills.
Give him one with which Mādhava-Krishna
can kill Nāgas and Piśācas.

16 For if you wish us to help you,
give us the means with which to help you;
and we will see that Indra's downpours
cease in the mahā-forest.

17 What skill and courage can do,
Pāvaka Agni, we are ready to do.
It is in your hands
to give us the weapons."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Agni listened.
Then the smoke-bannered god
mentally summoned Varuṇa,
protector of the worlds,

2 Aditi's lord-of-the-waters' son,
who makes his home
in the deeps. As soon as summoned,
Varuṇa appeared.

3 The smoke-flagged deity
respectfully greeted
the eternal lord of the waters,
the god of gods, the fourth *lokapāla*,

4 And said:
"Quickly give me your bow and quiver,
and the ape-flagged chariot
gifted by rājā Soma.

5 Today Pārtha-Arjuna has agreed to help me
with the Gāṇḍiva bow,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna with the *cakra*.
Give me both."

6 "You will have them," replied Varuṇa
to Pāvaka-Agni – and he produced
that marvellous weapon,
fame-enhancing, lustre-giving,

7 All-weapons-repulsing
foremost-of-all-weapons,
army-annihilating
gem-of-all-weapons,

8 One-hundred-thousand-bows-powerful,
kingdom-protecting,
multi-coloured, lovely-looking,
spotless, unflawed,

9 Dānava-respected, Gandharva-worshipped,
god-honoured,
the absolutely-without-defect-or-peer
Gāṇḍiva-bow.

10 He also gave a weapons-filled chariot,
flying the ape pennant,
pulled by silver-white gold-harnessed horses
of the gandharvas.

11 They looked like white clouds.
They were wind-swift and mind-swift.
The chariot was fully equipped
to repulse gods and Dānavas.

12 The chariot dazzled. Its wheels roared
and mahā-noise reverberated.
Its multi-gemmed glitter
bewitched the beholder.

13 It was created by Prajāpati-Viśvakarman
after great tapasyā.
Indescribable its splendour.
This was the chariot
riding which, in the past,
Soma routed the Dānavas.

14 It was like an evening cloud
shot with the glory of the setting sun.
It carried a gold-coloured flag-staff
like Śakra-Indra's rainbow

15 On which flew the pennant-of-the-ape,
a divine ape
fierce like a lion
and ferocious like a tiger.

16 The ape squatted on the chariot-top,
looking around with burning war-zeal.
More animals
from other pennants

17 Seemed to roar with heart-quaking fervour.
Then, *pradakṣiṇa* half-circling
the beflagged chariot,
bowing to the gods,

18 Armour-encased, sword-armed Pārtha-Arjuna,
sporting leather finger-guards,
climbed it, like a man of good deeds
ascending heaven.

19 He saw that divine, incomparable bow,
the Gāṇḍīva,
fashioned by Brahmā himself in the past,
and he was overjoyed.

20 He bowed to Hutāśana-Agni,
lifted the bow
with a single jerk,
and strung it.

21 The twanging noise it made
as mighty Pāṇḍava-Arjuna strung it,
would send a shudder
through the heart of any who heard.

22 Delighted with the chariot,
bow and inexhaustible quiver,
Kaunteya-Arjuna was convinced
he could now help Pāvaka-Agni.

23 Krishna received a dazzling *cakra*
with a fiery, spiky centre;
he too was now convinced
of his ability to help Agni.

24 "Krishna, slayer of Madhu,"
said Agni, "with this weapon
you will rout all your enemies,
human or superhuman.

25 This weapon will give you
power over rākṣasas,
Piśācas, Daityas, and Nāgas –
it will kill all your foes.

26 O Mādhava-Krishna! When you hurl it in battle
at an enemy, it will first kill him
and then whirl back
into your hand."

27 Next Prabhu Varuṇa gave Krishna
a club called Kaumodakī,
which whistled like thunder
and was meant for Daitya-slaughter.

28 Arjuna and Acyuta-Krishna joyfully said
to Pavāka-Agni:
"Bhagavan, shining god, we have the weapons,
we know how to use them;

29 We have beflagged war-chariots;
we can now defeat the gods,
the anti-gods, and Indra too
who fights on Takṣaka's behalf."

30 And Arjuna said, "When lord-of-the-senses
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna fights with his *cakra*,
nothing in the three worlds
can withstand Janārdana-Krishna.

31 O Pāvaka-Agni! I now have the Gāṇḍiva bow
and two inexhaustible quivers,
and I am now ready to crush any foe
in the three worlds.

32 Blaze up, O great lord!
Ring this huge forest with fire.
We are here,
and we will help you."

33 Encouraged by the words
of Dāśārha-Krishna and Arjuna,
Bhagavān Agni radiated all his fierceness
in order to consume the forest.

34 His seven tongues surrounded
the forest, like the flames
of dissolution at yuga-end,
and he began licking the Khāṇḍava.

35 O bull-brave Janamejaya!
He screamed and howled,
as he circled the forest,
his storm-cloud-roars made
all the creatures tremble.

36 The burning forest, O Bharata-Janamejaya,
looked like glittering Meru,
Indra of mountains,
lit up by dazzling sunbeams.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 The two excellent chariot-heroes
drove up in their chariots
and stationing themselves,
one on each end of the flaming forest,
they began the mahā-massacre
of creatures.

2 As soon as any Khāṇḍava creature
slipped out of the flames,
the two great heroes
killed it in flight.

3 So swiftly did they drive their chariots
that the creatures
could not escape between them.
The two powerful chariots
seemed to be one chariot,
the two heroes one assailant.

4 The Khāṇḍava blazed furiously.
Hundreds of thousands
of panicky animals, screaming,
ran helter-skelter.

5 Some with burning limbs, some scorched,
some with eyeballs bursting into flame,
some reduced to ashes,
some wildly fleeing . . .

6 Some dying without complaint,
holding on to their children,
their relatives, or parents;
so great was their filial love . . .

7 Some jumped high up,
biting their lower lips,
but dropped instantly back
into the raging fire below . . .

8 Some rolled on the ground,
wings twitching, eyes and claws
wrapped in the flames,
slowly roasting to their deaths . . .

9 Lakes and ponds in the forest,
heated by the flames, began to boil.
Dead fish and tortoises
lay scattered everywhere.

10 A holocaust of creatures!
Their burning bodies
looked like so many manifestations
of the god of fire Agni.

11 Birds that flew up were sliced down
by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows;
they plummeted back
into the roaring fire.

12 Others, their swift wings mutilated
by Arjuna's arrow-showers,
screeching dropped into the forest
of Khāṇḍavaprastha.

13 Wounded by arrows, hordes of forest-creatures
groaned and screamed,
producing a fearful wail
like that at the time of Ocean-Churning.

14 Shooting flames rose sky-high,
and the dwellers of heaven, the gods,
began fearing for their safety
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

15 All the shining gods rushed to their chief,
thousand-eyed Indra,
Indra of a thousand sacrifices,
anti-god-destroyer.

16 "Lord of the undying ones,"
they said, "why is Citrabhānu,
dazzling-with-radiance-Agni
bent on destroying all human life?

17 Harivāhāna-Indra saw the havoc
and devastation wrought by Agni,
and the great Vṛtra-slayer decided
to save the Khāṇḍava forest.

18 Vāsava-Indra, lord of the gods,
darkened the sky with thick
chariot-cloud clusters of all kinds;
and sent down drenching rain.

19 Ordered by Devarāja-Indra,
hundreds of thousands of clouds
splashed the Khāṇḍava forest with lines of rain
thick as chariot flagstaffs.

20 So intense was the fire-heat of Jātaveda-Agnī
however, that the shafts of rain
evaporated before they had a chance
to touch the forest.

21 Indra, Namuci-slayer, furious with Agnī,
summoned mahā-hordes
of rainclouds
and produced a heavier downpour.

22 Fire
Clashed
With rain,
Smoke
With cloud,
Fearful
Lightning
Flashed in the forest.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 Pāṇḍu's son Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
using his incomparable weapons,
countered Indra's shower of rain
with his own volley of arrows.

2 He riddled the Khāṇdava forest
with so many arrows
they obscured the forest
like a fog the moon

3 So thick that not a single forest creature
was able to penetrate it
and escape
ambidexterous Savyasācī's arrows.

4 Takṣaka, maha-powerful rājā of the Nāgas,
was not present at the time.
He was away in Kurukṣetra
while the forest burned.

5 Takṣaka's mighty son Aśvasena
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
made desperate attempts to escape
from the all-consuming Jātaveda-flames,

6 But was kept at bay
by the onslaught of Arjuna's arrows.
His mother, the snake-lady,
determined to save him,

7 Swallowed his head first, and,
while swallowing his tail,
she propelled herself upwards
to escape through the sky.

8 Pāṇḍava-Arjuna shot a sharp arrow,
slicing off her head.
Śacī's husband, thunder-wielding Indra,
saw this,

9 And to save her created a stormy gust
which temporarily
bewildered Arjuna.
In the confusion Aśvasena escaped.

10 Infuriated by this māyā,
and angered by the Nāga trick,
Pāṇḍava-Arjuna cut down each flying creature
into two or three pieces.

11 Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna cursed
the escaped Nāga in a burst of anger;
so did Vāsudeva-Krishna and Pavāka-Agni:
"May you always be without shelter!"

12 Remembering how he had been tricked,
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna became furious
and showered the sky with arrows
against the thousand-eyed god, Indra.

13 Lord-of-the-gods Devarāja Indra, likewise,
incited by Arjuna's wrath, hurled defiance,
and darkened the sky with swarm
upon swarm of his weapons.

14 Howling winds from turbulent oceans
gathered huge masses
of clouds, and a torrential downpour
hit Khāṇḍava.

15 Giant thunderclouds spat lightning,
and shattered the sky
with horrendous noise;
to counter these,

16 Arjuna expertly hurled his wind-weapon,
the Vāyavya, after chanting a mantra.
Instantly, the storm-clouds of Indra
scattered, the thunder

17 Silenced, the water vapours
in the clouds dried up,
and the fearful lightning-flashes
dispersed.

18 The dust and darkness vanished;
a soft, cool breeze
began to blow, and the sun-maṇḍala
became normal again.

19 Agni, fed with the meat
from the burning carcases,
flamed fiercely again, and filled
the worlds with his roaring.

20 O mahārāja Janamejayan! Seeing the forest
destroyed by the two Krishnas,
the lovely-plumaged creatures
of the Garuḍa race proudly swept down

21 From the sky, intent on ripping apart
both Krishna and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
with their thunder-strong wings,
beaks and talons.

22 A host of Nāgas also rushed
towards the Pāṇḍava,
their faces spitting the most deadly
of snake-venoms.

23 But Pārtha-Arjuna cut them to pieces
with his anger-flame-tipped arrows.
The birds and snakes fell headlong
into the flames.

24 Bellicose anti-gods, gandharvas,
yakṣas, rākṣasas and Nāgas –
countless numbers of them –
rushed in, yelling fearfully.

25 Armed with weapons that fired
iron balls and pellets,
and machines launching stones and rockets,
they pounced on Krishna

26 And Pārtha-Arjuna, who blocked
their terrible hail of missiles,
Arjuna decapitated them
with a counter-swarm of sharp arrows.

27 Refulgent foe-slaying Krishna,
using his *cakra*,
piled up a massive slaughter
of Daityas and Dānavas.

28 Mangled by his *cakra* and pierced by his arrows,
those incalculably strong anti-gods
lay on the ground,
like flotsam on a sea-beach.

29 Maheśvara Śakra-Indra, lord of the gods,
riding his white elephant,
advanced against the two heroes, and,
without warning, lifted

30 His fire-tipped thunderbolt.
Indra, anti-god-slayer,
said to the gods,
"They are dead!"

31 Seeing Devendra-Indra on the point
of hurling his mahā-thunderbolt,
the other gods began brandishing
their own weapons.

32 O rājā Janamejaya! Yama, god of death, lifted
Kalā-daṇḍa, his rod of Terrifying Time;
Dhaneśvara-Kubera, god of wealth, his mace;
Varuṇa his noose and varied missiles;

33 Skanda, general of the gods,
his śakti-spear and he stood motionless
like Meru mountain;
the Aśvins their shining plants;

34 Dhātṛ, the Creator, his bow;
Jaya his mighty mace:
Tvaṣṭṛ of mahā-strength
lifted up a whole hill;

35 Aṁśa-Āditya the sun a śakti-dart;
Mṛtyu god of death, a battle-axe;
Aryaman strutted about,
flourishing a fearful *parigha*-club;

36 Mitra stood with a *cakra*
sharp as a razor.
O lord of the earth!
Pūṣan, Bhaga, and irascible Savitā

37 Attacked Pārtha-Arjuna and Krishna
with bows and swords.
The Rudras, the Vasus,
the mahā-powerful Maruts,

38 The Viśvadevas,
and the self-effulgent Sādhyas –
these and others attacked Arjuna
and Puruṣottama-Krishna

39 With the sole aim of killing them.
What wonders transpired
on that field
of fierce battle!

40 Weird portents were seen,
as if a yuga were ending.
Seeing them, Śakra-Indra and the millions of gods
readied for battle.

41 The fearless and undefeatable pair
stood unruffled
with their bows and arrows;
ingenious in the arts of war,

42 The two heroes warded off
the attacking hosts of gods
with repeated shower after shower
of thunder-like arrows.

43 The gods fled in fear
and sought Śakra-Indra's shelter.
Seeing the rout of the gods
by Mādhava-Krishna and Arjuna,

44 The ṛṣis who live in the sky marvelled;
Śakra-Indra too,
watching the magnificent prowess
of the heroic pair,

45 Was greatly pleased – and again attacked,
this time Pākaśāsana,
destroyer-of-the-anti-god-Pāka Indra,
attacked with a volley
of huge stones
in order to test

46 The skill of Savyasācī,
ambidexterous Arjuna,
hero of left-handed excellence.
Arjuna repulsed the attack.

47 Hardly had he done so
than Śatakratu-Indra
of a thousand sacrifices
launched a second heavier stone shower.

48 Again, Arjuna delighted his father
by swiftly scattering
the missiles
with well-aimed arrows.

49 Indra, with the aim of finishing off
Pāṇḍu's son, uprooted
a pinnacle of Mandara mountain,
and hurled it at Arjuna.

50 Arjuna splintered the peak
into a thousand pieces
with a volley of swift,
fire-breathing arrows.

51 Fragments of the shattered peak
fell through the sky
like the sun, moon and planets
would fall if unloosed.

52 They fell on the flaming forest,
killing many creatures
of Khāṇḍavaprastha as they landed
(said Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY

1 So fearful was the carnage
 that the creatures of Khāṇḍava –
Dānavas, rākṣasas, Nāgas,
 cheetahs, bears,

2 Wolves, rutting elephants, lions,
 deer, buffaloes, hundreds of birds –
fled screaming
 in all directions.

3 They could see the flames,
 and through them the two Krishnas
waiting, armed. The fearful noise
 paralysed them.

4 Frightened by the fire,
 frightened by the waiting pair,
they set up a perpetual wail
 of panicky moans.

5 It seemed that the sky
 would burst with the screaming
of the fire and the roaring
 of the stricken creatures.

6 It was then that dark-skinned
 Keśava-Krishna hurled at them
his large, fiery, radiant *cakra,*
 to destroy them in one stroke.

7 The *cakra* whistled through them,
 through the sky-ranging rākṣasas,
mutilating, chopping, the pieces
 falling into the mouth of Agni.

8 Mangled by Krishna's *cakra,*
the Daityas, dripping
with their own fat and blood,
looked like sunset-streaked clouds.

9 And Krishna, great Vṛṣṇi hero,
moved through them like Kāla,
the Spirit of Cosmic Time, slaughtering
birds, Piśācas, Nāgas and others.

10 The *cakra*, hurled by Krishna,
slayer of his enemies,
sped swiftly and butchered as it went;
then returned to Krishna's hand.

11 And as he killed them –
the Piśācas, Nāgas, and rākṣasas –
the sight of Atman-of-all-creatures Krishna –
it was terrible to behold!

12 The gods who had assembled there
to defeat Pāṇḍava-Arjuna and Krishna
now realised
it was an impossible task.

13 And when they saw
that they could neither extinguish the fire
nor save the creatures,
they fled.

14 Śatakratu-Indra of a thousand sacrifices
saw them retreating,
rejoiced, and praised the prowess
of Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna.

15 As the gods withdrew,
a bodiless voice from the sky
spoke out loud and clear
to Indra of a thousand sacrifices:

16 "Your friend, the incomparable Nāga Takṣaka,
has not been killed.
Before the fire started in Khāṇḍava
he had left for Kurukṣetra.

17 Listen to my words, Vāsava-Indra!
No one will ever defeat
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna
on a field of battle.

18 They are Nara and Nārāyaṇa.
These two ṛṣis were previously in heaven.
I will tell you
of their prowess and fame.

19 They are invincible in battle:
these splendid ṛṣis of the past
cannot be defeated by anyone
in the three worlds.

20 They are worthy of respect
from gods, anti-gods, yakṣas,
rākṣasas, gandharvas, *kinnaras,*
humans and Nāgas.

21 Leave this place, O Vāsava-Indra!
Take the gods with you!
The destruction of Khāṇḍava
is ordained by fate."

22 Lord of the undying ones Amareśvara-Indra
accepted the sky-voice's words,
gave up his anger and returned
(continued Vaiśampāyana) to heaven.

23 When the shining god of gods left,
the other heaven-dwellers
followed him
with their large armies.

24 Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna saw
Devarāja-Indra and the gods retreat,
and gave vent
to a tremendous lion-roar.

25 With Devarāja-Indra gone,
Kesava-Krishna and Arjuna exulted.
Unopposed, they helped Agni
to consume the forest.

26 Scattering the gods
as a wind scatters clouds,
Arjuna released arrow-showers and began
slaughtering the forest creatures.

27 Mortally wounded by the arrows
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
hardly any of the forest's creatures
succeeded in escaping.

28 The foremost warriors dared not
look Arjuna in the eye –
the question of facing him
in battle hardly arose.

29 Arjuna! – he could, if he wished,
wound a hundred with one arrow,
or one with a hundred arrows.
Attacked by him,

30 Creatures died as if Kāla had struck them;
or they wandered,
forever afflicted, by river-banks,
plains, and distant places.

31 Yelling, screaming, howling,
elephants, deer and hyenas
set up a continuous wail
of fearful suffering.

32 Fish in the sea and the Gaṅgā,
the tribes of Vidyādharas in the forest,
and others
trembled with fear.

33 Who could even think of fighting
mahā-muscled Arjuna and Janārdana-Krishna
when it was impossible
even to took at them?

34 All the rākṣasas, Nāgas and Dānavas
who rushed out
in hordes to attack the pair,
were slaughtered by Hari-Krishna's *cakra*.

35 Decapitated and disembowelled
by the discus,
these mahā-bodied creatures collapsed
and fell in the consuming flames.

36 And the flames, fed with flesh,
blood and fat, swirled upwards
in circular smoky wreaths
touching the sky.

37 Incandescent, copper-eyed Agni,
flame-haired, flaming-tongued,
huge-mouthed god of fire Agni,
with Arjuna's and Krishna's help,

38 Lapped up the ceaseless flow
of bloody fat.
His face shone with delight,
with the satiety of all desires.

39 Suddenly the slayer of Madhu,
Madhusūdana-Krishna,
spotted the anti-god Maya sneaking away
from the forest-abode of Takṣaka.

40 Wind-charioted Agni immediately
assumed a matted-hair shape
and, with fierce cloud-roars,
pursued the anti-god.

41 Vāsudeva-Krishna blocked the flight of Maya
with upraised *cakra*.
The anti-god saw the *cakra* in front,
and Agni behind,

42 And shouted,
"O Arjuna, come! Help me! Help me!"
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna heard the frightened cries,
and said, "Do not fear."

43 Pārtha-Arjuna's assurance gave Maya
new life. Because Arjuna
had given his word,
Krishna, the Dāśārha hero,

44 Refrained from striking down
with his *cakra* Namuci's brother Maya.
Pāvaka-Agni also held himself
in check.

45 Warded off from Pākaśāsana-Indra's attacks
by the combined efforts
of Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna
Khāṇḍava burnt for fifteen days.

46 Agni spared the lives
of only six creatures:
Aśvasena, Maya, and four birds
known as *śarṅgakas*.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 "Tell me, O Brahmin," asked Janamejaya,
"what made Agni
spare the lives of the *śarṅgakas*
when the whole forest burnt down?

2 I know why Aśvasena and the Dānava
anti-god Maya were spared.
But you have not explained
the case of the *śarṅgakas*.

3 It must have been truly strange –
the sparing of the *śarṅgakas*.
Tell us, O Brahmin,
why Agni left them alone."

4 Let me explain, O foe-smiter,
why Agni preferred to spare
the *śarṅgakas* of Khāṇḍavaprastha
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

5 Once upon a time,
there lived a holy man
named Mandapāla, a learned,
rich-in-dharma-and-tapasyā ṛṣi.

6 O rājā! Following the paths of those ṛṣis
who sublimate their sex desires,
he devoted himself to sense-control,
dharma, and strict tapasyā.

7 With tapasyā he crossed all sensual weaknesses,
discarded his body
and entered the *pitṛ*-world.
He did not get his rewards there.

8 So he enquired of the dwellers of heaven,
who were sitting
around Dharmarāja, the god of justice,
why his tapasyā was fruitless.

9 "Why are these regions closed
to my tapasyā?" asked Mandapāla.
"What have I forgotten to do,
that I should be denied this fruit of karma?

10 Tell me, O gods of heaven,
why are these regions denied me?
I am prepared to do anything
to obtain of fruits of tapasyā."

11 "Listen, Brahmin," replied the gods.
"Men are born indebted
to religious rituals, brahmacarya,
and progeny. No doubt of this.

12 These debts can be repaid by yajñas,
tapasyā, and offspring.
You are an ascetic, you have performed yajñas,
but are without offspring.

13 The celestial realm is closed to you,
because you are without offspring.
Have children –
and enjoy many happy regions.

14 The śruti-scriptures say that
a son is called *putra*
because he saves his father
from the hell known as *put*.
O best of Brahmins, our advice is:
have children."

15 Mandapāla, after listening to the gods,
began thinking of the best way
of getting as many children
as soon as possible.

16 After much thought, he concluded
that birds were the most procreative
of creatures; so he assumed the form
of a male *śārṅgaka*,
and had intercourse
with a female of the species

17 Named Jaritā, who gave birth to four sons,
all learned in the Vedas.
Leaving them with their mother
in their egg-state,

18 The shining ṛṣi O Bhārata descendant Janamejaya,
the shining ṛṣi went away
to another part of the forest to Lapitā
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

19 Deeply worried, Jaritā loved her babies
and tended them carefully,
though they had been deserted
by their father in Khāṇḍava.

20 They were still in their egg-state,
and she gave them
all the maternal affection
instinctive to the species.

21 It was some time after this
that the ṛṣi Mandapāla,
roaming in the forest with Lapitā,
saw Agni lumbering towards Khāṇḍava.

22 He guessed Agni's purpose, and,
fearing for his children,
supplicated the mahā-radiant
Lokapāla Jātaveda Agni (to save his sons):

23 "Agni!
Mouth of the worlds!
Drinker of ghee!
Purifier! Pāvaka-Agni!
Invisible energy
In the bodies
Of all creatures!

24 You are One,
Say the learned,
And you are Three.
The wise
Offer you yajña,
And say you are Eight!

25 Your built
This universe,
Say the supreme sages.
O drinker of ghee!
If you left the worlds
For a single day,
All would totter,
All would perish!

26 The twice-born
Bow to you,
And with wives and children
Obtain the eternal realms
Of the doers of good deeds.

27 O Agni!
The wise say
You are a flash of lightning!
Your forked flames
Consume all on earth!

28 O radiant god!
The universe
Is your creation!
The Vedas are your words!
Karma is your creation!
Moving and unmoving life
Depends on you!

29 Water
Depends on you!
The universe
Depends on you!
Ghee offerings
In the yajña,
Food libations
To the *pitṛs*,
Depend on you!

30 You are Creator,
You are Consumer,
You are Bṛhaspati,
You are the Aśvins!
You are Mitra-Sūrya,
You are Soma,
You are Anila-Vāyu!"

31 Pleased with the praises
sung in his honour
by the illimitably radiant muni Mandapāla,
the radiant god Pāvata-Agni

32 Said to him joyfully:
"What would you like from me?"
Mandapāla with palms folded in *āñjali* said:
"Spare my sons when Khāṇḍava burns."

33 The drinker of sacred libations Havyavāhana-Agni
said, "You have my word."
Almost on that very instant
he blazed forth to destroy Khāṇḍava.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 As the flames increased,
the distress of the *śārṅgakas* also grew.
However they tried,
they found no means of escape.

2 Their tapasyā-rich mother Jaritā,
afflicted with grief,
knowing her sons were young and helpless,
lamented loudly:

3 "Oh the fierce fire!
Creator of my sorrows!
Running towards us,
Burning the forest
Even as it runs, and
Illuminating the universe!

4 My poor little innocent ones!
How my heart grieves for them!
Without feathers, without feet!
The only redeemers of our ancestors!

5 The fire-tongue comes forward,
Licking at the tall trees,
And my helpless unfledged ones –
How will they escape?

6 I cannot escape, either,
specially with them to protect.
I cannot leave them here.
O my poor little ones!

7 Which of them shall I desert?
Which shall I save?
What is the right dharma for me?
O my children, tell me!

8 I have thought and thought,
and I can see no way out.
Come beneath my wings –
let us all die together.

9 Your heartless father left you
saying, 'Jaritāri the eldest
will redeem my race. Sārisṛkka,
the second, will have children

10 To increase the family line.
My third, Stambamitra,
will perform tapasyā. Droṇa, the youngest,
will be the wisest in the Vedas.'

11 And now this great calamity!
Who should I save?
I don't know. I can't think clearly.
What should be my duty?
No matter how hard I think,
I can't find any way out

12 The little *śārṅgakas* said
to their sorrowing mother,
"Mother, forget your love for us.
Fly away to safety.

13 If we die, you can still have more children;
but if you die,
there will be no one left
to redeem our race.

14 Mother, you have two choices,
both terrible,
Decide to do that which is best
for the welfare of our race.

15 Do not do anything just because
you love us. If you survive,
our father who wants the realms of the gods
will be happy,"

16 "There's a hole under this tree,"
said Jāritā. "Hide in it,
Quickly! Once you are inside,
the fire won't harm you.

17 The instant you are in,
my little ones, I will stop
its mouth with grassy rubbish.
It's the only way of escape!

18 When the flames subside,
I will come and remove
the ashes and rubbish.
Listen to me, my children!"

19 The *śārṅgakas* said:
"We are just lumps of flesh,
without any feathers. If we hide
in the hole, won't the rat
eat us up? We are afraid; mother,
we daren't go in.

20 It's the fire for us –
or the rat. We can't see
how our father's wish will succeed,
or how we will be saved.

21 Enter the hole – and the rat kills us.
Stay outside,
and the fire consumes us.
Two kinds of death for us!
Mother, we prefer to burn alive
than be eaten by a rat.

22 To be nibbled to death by a rat
is a shameful end.
But even the wise allow
the body's departure in fire."

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 Jaritā said: "The rat of this hole
was pounced on
and carried away by a falcon.
You needn't be afraid."

2 The *śārṅgakas* replied:
"How can we be sure?
There may be more rats here.
We are afraid of those.

3 The flames may be shifted by the winds
to some other part of the forest.
But whoever lives in the hole
will kill us.

4 If we remain as we are,
death may or may not strike us.
Mother, better that than do something
which makes death certain.
You should escape, for your escape
could mean more children like us."

5 "My little ones," said Jaritā,
"I saw with my own eyes
the falcon dive down and fly off
with the rat. I followed him
and blessed him for doing
what he did, saying,

6 *Fly away, O rājā of falcons,*
with the rat our enemy!
May you be golden-fleshed in heaven!
May you have no enemy!

7 When he had eaten the rat,
I took his leave
and returned to you, my children.
O my little ones,

8 Take heart and enter this hole.
I give you my word –
you have nothing to be fear.
I saw the falcon eat the rat."

9 "Mother," replied the *śārṅgakas*,
"how can we be sure
that the falcon did so?
Until then, we are afraid to enter."

10 "But you have my word,"
replied their mother Jaritā.
"Is that not enough, my children?
Do as I advise. Do not fear."

11 The *śārṅgakas* said, "It is not,
mother, that we think what you say
is not true. An agitated person
does not always act responsibly.

12 After all, what have we done for you?
You don't know who we are.
Why do you take such pains to save us?
Who are we to mean so much to you?

13 You are young and beautiful.
You should soon find your husband.
Go, mother, search for him.
Have more splendid sons by him.

14 And let us go to the highest realms
by perishing in the fire.
If we are lucky and survive it,
you can always claim us back."

15 So Jaritā left her sons
(continued Vaiśampāyana) in the forest,
and flew in haste to a place of safety,
where no fire blazed.

16 Havyāvahana-Agni, fearfully flaming,
rushed to the forest
where the sons of Mandapāla
awaited their destruction.

17 They saw the flaming being approach
and began whispering
among themselves. Jaritāri said,
so that Pāvaka-Agni could overhear:

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 “In the midst of crisis,
the wise man is serene.
Calamity approaches,
but he does not fear.

2 The confused man suffers;
he is not composed
when calamity strikes.
No peace of mind for him.”

3 “You are patient and wise,”
said Sārisṛkka. “Our lives
are in danger. Out of many,
only one shows wisdom and courage.”

4 “The elder brother protects,”
said Stambamitra. “The elder brother
wards off calamity. If he fails,
what can younger brothers do?”

5 “The cruel god of seven mouths
and tongues is on us,”
said Droṇa, “he is radiating fierce energy,
he is licking up all life!”

6 Then all the brothers (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the sons of Mandapāla reverently
chanted songs of praise to Agni.
Listen to their chants, O lord of the earth.

7 Jaritāri chanted:
“Agni!
You are the ātman of wind!
You are the body of all vegetation!
Earth and water are your yoni!
You are the semen of water!

8 Your flames, O Agni,
Are like the rays of the sun!
They are above us,
And below us,
They are behind us,
On every side of us!"

9 Sārisṛkka chanted:
"Smoke-bannered god!
We cannot see our mother,
We do not know our father,
We do not have feathers . . .
O Agni,
Protect us, we are helpless,
We have none to save us save you!

10 In this hour of our suffering,
O Agni,
Seven-flamed god,
Protect us,
Be to us like a father and mother!

11 Drinker of ghee, Agni, Havyavāhana-Jātaveda,
Giver of heat, Agni,
You who give heat to the rays of the sun,
We are young,
We are infant ṛṣis,
O Agni, save us,.
We implore you to leave this place!"

12 Stambamitra chanted:
"Agni,
You are all!
The worlds depend on you,
You sustain all creatures,
You give life to all that changes!

13 Agni, Havyavāhana,
You are the drinker of ghee,
You are ghee itself.
The wise know:
You are One,
You are Many!

14 Ghee-drinking Agni!
You created the three worlds,
And when dissolution comes
You will swell and destroy them.
You are the seed of the universe,
You are the essence of doom!"

15 Droṇa chanted:
"Lord of the universe!
You are the secret of growing bodies,
You the heat that digests
The food people eat.
All is steadfast in you!

16 God from whose mouth sprang the Vedas!
You are the sun sucking
The sap and liquids of the earth.
You return them as rain,
And all things grow.

17 All plants and green-leaved creepers
Are born from you again and again,
O Agni,
The lakes and ponds,
The great ocean itself,
Are born from you.

18 Fiery-rayed god!
Our flesh depends on Varuṇa, god of the waters.
Your heat oppresses and withers us.
O be kind to us!
Protect us!
Do not kill us today!

19 Copper-eyed, red-necked Agni!
God who leaves a black trail!
Hutāśana-Agni! Save us!
As the ocean veers its course
To save chosen houses on the shore,
Save us!"

20 Agni heard these chants of Droṇa,
learned in the Vedas,
Jātaveda-Agni was pleased,
and recalled his promise.

21 Agni said: "Droṇa, you are a ṛṣi,
what you say is the truth of the Vedas.
Do not fear.
I will do as you wish.

22 A long time ago Mandapāla asked me
to spare his sons
when I consumed Khāṇḍava.
What he said then, what you say now,

23 Are words of profound meaning.
Tell me what you would like.
O Brahmin! Your holy chanting today
has given me the greatest pleasure."

24 Droṇa said:
"O Agni, cats in the forest
make a habit of eating us.
O Hutāśana-Agni! Destroy all of them."

25 So Agni did what
the *śārṅgakas* asked him.
O Janamejaya! He swelled in strength,
and continued to devour the forest.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 O Kaurava Janamejaya!
Meanwhile Mandapāla, though he had made
the special request to Agni,
began to worry over the safety
of his sons.

2 Anxiety troubled him so much
that he said to Lapitā:
"My baby sons were not able to move
when I left them –

3 I wonder how they are.
When the flames fan out
with strong winds blowing,
will they be able to save themselves?

4 And their ascetic-minded mother –
will she be able to save them?
How terribly will she suffer
when she finds herself helpless!

5 She will run out wildly,
screaming and lamenting,
because my sons can neither
scurry on the ground, nor fly in the air.

6 My poor son Jaritāri!
My poor sons Sārisṛkka
and Stambamitra and Droṇa!
My poor deserted wife!"

7 Lapitā heard ṛṣi Mandapala mourning
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and out of jealousy,
she said:

8 "Don't worry about them.
They are great ṛṣis, are they not?
You yourself told me so.
Why should they fear fire?

9 With my own ears
I heard you speak to Agni about them.
Didn't the mahā-ātmaned god Agni
give you his word?

10 Agni protects life. He is a Lokapāla.
He will not break his promise.
You are so full of your family
you never think of others!

11 All you think of is her!
Now I know –
the love you have for her
is different from your love for me.

12 Oh I know –
you have two different loyalties.
Of course one will suffer –
but who's the one you love more?

13 Go to Jaritā!
Your heart misses her, doesn't it?
I'll wander alone – my punishment
for loving a fickle man."

14 "It is not as you think,"
Mandapāla replied.
"I came here to have sons.
My sons are now in danger.

15 The man is a fool who abandons
what is in his hands
for what might come. No one respects him.
You are free to do as you like.

16 When I think of the flames,
my heart seems to burn.
All kinds of fearful omens dance
before my eyes."

17 After Agni had spared the spot
where the *śārṅgakas* were,
Jaritā, concerned for her children,
rushed to the forest.

18 She found them safe and sound,
untouched by the flames.
They saw their mother,
and began crying.

19 She wept too. She saw them and wept.
She wept repeatedly.
She hugged her crying children,
one by one.

20 Exactly at that moment, O Bharata Janamejaya,
Mandapāla arrived.
None of his sons showed joy
on seeing him.

21 He spoke to them one by one.
He spoke to Jaritā, again and again.
None replied.
Not one word, good or otherwise.

22 "Who is the first-born?"
asked Mandapāla.
"Who next? Who is the third?
Who is the youngest?

23 My sadness speaks to you.
Why don't you reply?
Oh, I know I deserted you –
but I never found peace elsewhere."

24 "What right have you to ask,"
said Jaritā, "who is the eldest,
the second, the third,
and who the youngest?

25 Go to sweet-smiling Lapitā,
who is young and lovely.
What you didn't find in me,
you must have found in her."

26 Mandapāla said:
"Nothing ruins a woman's happiness
more in this world or the next
than a co-wife or a secret lover.

27 How the flames of worry
and hostility then rise!
Even sweet-mannered, auspicious Arundhatī,
most famous

28 And honoured of women,
became jealous of mahā-ātmaned,
holy-minded Vasiṣṭha, who was devoted
to his wife's welfare.

29 And she insulted him –
one of the seven great ṛṣis!
Because she did so, she was turned
into a smoke-filmed star,
sometimes invisible, sometimes hidden,
as if she was an evil sign.

30 I had intercourse with you because
I wanted sons, and you wanted sons.
You got what you wanted.
Now, like Arundhatī, you are jealous.

31 I have come to see my sons.
And you revile me.
Even as you make fun of me now,
Lapitā did when I left her.

32 Men should never put faith in women,
not even in wives.
When a woman becomes a mother,
she cares even less for her husband."

33 As soon as he finished
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
his sons came forward to honour him,
and he spoke gently to them.

SECTION TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 "I asked Agni to protect you,"
said Mandapāla,
"and the mahā-ātmaned god gave me word
that he would.

2 Because I trusted Agni,
because your mother is a lady of dharma,
and because I knew you to be supremely brave,
I did not come earlier.

3 My sons, do not let anger overcome you.
You are ṛṣis,
learned in the wisdom of the Vedas.
Agni is aware of this."

4 Mandapāla reassured his sons,
and, taking them and his wife with him,
he left Khāṇḍava
and went away to another land.

5 Waxing in fearful strength,
Bhagavān Agni,
with the help of the two Krishnas,
consumed the whole of Khāṇḍava.

6 Pāvaka-Agni drank up whole rivers
of fat, blood, and marrow;
and was pleased, and he relaxed;
and then he appeared before Arjuna.

7 And Bhagavān Puraṁdara-Indra,
surrounded by all the Maruts,
descended from the sky and spoke
to Pārtha-Arjuna and Keśava-Krishna:

8 "You have accomplished something
even a god might find impossible.
Ask any boon unavailable to men,
for I am greatly pleased with you."

9 Pārtha-Arjuna asked for all
of Śakra-Indra's weapons, and Indra
appointed the time for their giving.
He said:

10 "Son of Pāṇḍu,
when Bhagavān Mahādeva-Śiva
is pleased with you,
I shall give you all my weapons.

11 Delighter-of-the-Kauravas, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
I will know when the time is ripe.
All my fire-and wind-weapons
will then be yours to take."

12 Vāsudeva-Krishna asked that his friendship
with Pārtha-Arjuna be eternal.
Indra, chief of the gods,
granted intelligent Krishna's request.

13 Having bestowed these boons,
and after speaking to Agni,
the lord of the Maruts, accompanied by the gods,
returned to heaven.

14 Pāvaka-Agni consumed the Khāṇḍava forest,
with all its birds and animals
and other creatures, for fifteen days;
then, gratified, he rested.

15 He devoured flesh copiously,
and drank fat and blood.
Satisfied with himself,
he said to Arjuna and Acyuta-Krishna:

16 "You have pleased me immensely, O heroes.
You are supreme-among-men.
Now I give you permission –
you may go where you like."

17 They heard mahā-ātmaned Pāvaka-Agni.
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna,
accompanied by the anti-god Maya,
roamed for a while,

18 Before coming to the banks
of an entrancing river
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
There the three sat down.

THE ĀDI PARVA
ENDS HERE

CONTENTS

Ādiparva: The Ancient Chronicle

[Note: The Mahābhārata has 95 "Chapters";
19 Chapters comprise the Ādi Parva.]

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanagari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

VOWELS

Guttaral	अ	आ
	a	ā
Palatal	इ	ई
	i	ī
Labial	उ	ऊ
	u	ū
Dental	ऋ	
	ṛ	
Guttaral-Palatal	ए	ऐ
	e	ai
Guttaral-Labial	ओ	औ
	o	au

CONSONANTS

Guttaral	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvara = ṁ

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL

The Mahābhārata

OF VYASA

The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Ādi Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1968-1970 as hardbound volumes 1-26

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